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Commission for Social Development
Fifty-seventh session
11–21 February 2019
Item 2 of the provisional agenda
Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters

Provisional annotated agenda and proposed organization of work

Provisional agenda

1. Election of officers.
2. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters.
3. Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly:
   (a) Priority theme: addressing inequalities and challenges to social inclusion through fiscal, wage and social protection policies;
   (b) Review of relevant United Nations plans and programmes of action pertaining to the situation of social groups:
      (i) World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons;
      (ii) Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities;
      (iii) World Programme of Action for Youth;
      (iv) Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002;
      (v) Family issues, policies and programmes;
   (c) Emerging issues: the empowerment of people affected by natural and human-made disasters to reduce inequality: addressing the differential impact on persons with disabilities, older persons and youth.
4. Programme questions and other matters:
   (a) Proposed programme plan for 2020;
   (b) United Nations Research Institute for Social Development.
5. Provisional agenda for the fifty-eighth session of the Commission.
6. Adoption of the report of the Commission on its fifty-seventh session.

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Annotations

1. Election of officers

Rule 15 of the rules of procedure of the functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council stipulates that, at the commencement of the first meeting of a regular session, the Commission shall elect from among the representatives of its members a Chair, one or more Vice-Chairs and such other officers as may be required. In subparagraph (c) of its decision 2002/210, the Economic and Social Council decided that, immediately following the closure of a regular session, the Commission for Social Development would hold the first meeting of its subsequent regular session for the sole purpose of electing the new Chair and other members of the Bureau. Accordingly, the Commission held the first meeting of its fifty-seventh session on 7 February 2018, immediately following the closure of the fifty-sixth session, and elected by acclamation Sama Salem Poules (Iraq) as Vice-Chair of the Commission for its fifty-seventh session. At the same meeting, the Commission postponed the election of the remaining four officers, on the understanding that upon nomination by their respective groups, the candidates would be allowed to participate in the meetings of the Bureau held in preparation for the fifty-seventh session of the Commission.

Subsequently, the Eastern European States nominated Carolina Popovici (Republic of Moldova) as Vice-Chair of the Commission at its fifty-seventh session.

On 11 February 2019, the Commission will be invited to elect the Chair from the African States and Vice-Chairs from the Eastern European States, the Latin American and Caribbean States and the Western European and other States, and to designate one of its Vice-Chairs as Rapporteur.

2. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters

Rule 7 of the rules of procedure requires that, after the election of its officers at the beginning of each session, the Commission shall adopt the agenda for that session on the basis of the provisional agenda. The provisional agenda and documentation for the fifty-seventh session of the Commission were approved by the Economic and Social Council in its decision 2018/219.

The proposed organization of work of the Commission at its fifty-seventh session (see annex I) has been prepared pursuant to relevant decisions of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council to facilitate the consideration of agenda items within the time frame available and in accordance with the conference services allocated to the Commission. The timetable should be considered tentative and indicative: if the Commission completes its consideration of an item ahead of schedule, it may wish to proceed immediately to the next item.

The Commission is scheduled to meet from Monday, 11 February, to Thursday, 21 February 2019, with no meeting on Monday, 18 February, which is a United Nations floating holiday. Arrangements have been made to hold morning and afternoon meetings during the session: morning meetings will be held from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. and afternoon meetings from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m.

Documentation

Provisional annotated agenda and proposed organization of work (E/CN.5/2019/1)

3. Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly

In accordance with General Assembly resolution 55/46 on the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the Assembly entitled "World Summit for Social Development and beyond: achieving social development for all in a globalizing world", the Commission will undertake regular assessment of the implementation of the Copenhagen commitments and the further initiatives adopted in Geneva, in a manner consistent with the functions and contributions of the relevant organs, organizations and bodies of the United Nations system, and shall advise the Council.

The Commission serves as the main United Nations forum for an intensified global dialogue on social development issues and will contribute to the follow-up to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, within its existing mandate, by supporting the thematic reviews of the high-level political forum on sustainable development on progress with regard to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, including cross-cutting issues, which should reflect the integrated nature of the Goals as well as the interlinkages between them.

Documentation

Report of the Secretary-General on the social dimensions of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (E/CN.5/2019/2)

(a) Priority theme: addressing inequalities and challenges to social inclusion through fiscal, wage and social protection policies

In its resolution 2018/3, the Council decided that the Commission would consider one priority theme at each session on the basis of the follow-up to and review of the World Summit and its linkages to the social dimensions of the 2030 Agenda, proposing an action-oriented resolution with recommendations to the Council in order to contribute to its work. The Council decided that the priority theme for the 2019 session would be "Addressing inequalities and challenges to social inclusion through fiscal, wage and social protection policies". The Commission will have before it the report of the Secretary-General on the priority theme.

Documentation

Report of the Secretary-General on addressing inequalities and challenges to social inclusion through fiscal, wage and social protection policies (E/CN.5/2019/3)

(b) Review of relevant United Nations plans and programmes of action pertaining to the situation of social groups

(i) World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons

(ii) Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities

(iii) World Programme of Action for Youth

(iv) Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002

(v) Family issues, policies and programmes

The Commission will consider issues pertaining to the situation of social groups.

Documentation

Report of the Secretary-General on promoting the rights of persons with disabilities and strengthening the mainstreaming of disability in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (E/CN.5/2019/4)

Report of the Secretary-General on policies and programmes involving youth (E/CN.5/2019/5)

Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the objectives of the International Year of the Family and its follow-up processes (A/74/61-E/2019/4)

(c) Emerging issues: the empowerment of people affected by natural and human-made disasters to reduce inequality: addressing the differential impact on persons with disabilities, older persons and youth

In its resolution 2006/18, the Economic and Social Council decided to include the agenda item entitled "Emerging issues" in the programme of work of the Commission. After consultation with the five regional groups, the members of the Bureau agreed that the theme for discussion under this agenda item during the fifty-seventh session would be "The empowerment of people affected by natural and human-made disasters to reduce inequality: addressing the differential impact on persons with disabilities, older persons and youth". A note by the Secretariat will be available to facilitate the discussion.

Documentation

Note by the Secretariat entitled "Emerging issues: the empowerment of people affected by natural and human-made disasters to reduce inequality: addressing the differential impact on persons with disabilities, older persons and youth" (E/CN.5/2019/7)

4. Programme questions and other matters

(a) Proposed programme plan for 2020

(b) United Nations Research Institute for Social Development

Nomination of members of the Board of the Institute

The Board of the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development is composed of 10 members, who are nominated by the Commission and confirmed by the Economic and Social Council for a term of four years, renewable once for a further two years, in accordance with Commission resolution 10 (XXV).

The Commission, at its fifty-seventh session, will be called upon to nominate new members and to renominate one member for a further period of two years. The Council will be called upon to confirm those nominated in 2019.

Documentation

Note by the Secretary-General on the nomination of members of the Board of the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (E/CN.5/2019/9)

Report of the Board of the Institute

In accordance with its terms of reference, the Board of the Institute submits to the Commission a report on the progress of its work. The Commission will have before it the report of the Board covering 2017 and 2018.

Documentation

Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Board of the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (E/CN.5/2019/8)

5. Provisional agenda for the fifty-eighth session of the Commission

In accordance with rule 9 of the rules of procedure of the functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council, the Commission will have before it the draft provisional agenda for its fifty-eighth session, together with an indication of the documentation to be submitted for its consideration.

Documentation

Draft provisional agenda for the fifty-eighth session of the Commission (E/CN.5/2019/L.1)[1]

6. Adoption of the report of the Commission on its fifty-seventh session

In accordance with rule 37 of the rules of procedure of the functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council, the Commission shall submit to the Council a report on the work of its fifty-seventh session.

Documentation

Draft report of the Commission on its fifty-seventh session (E/CN.5/2019/L.2)[1]

[1] To be issued as an in-session document.

Annex I

Proposed organization of work (11–21 February 2019)

Date	*Agenda item*	*Documentation programme*
Week of 11–15 February 2019		
Monday, 11 February		
a.m.	Opening of the session	
	1. Election of officers	
	2. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters	Provisional annotated agenda and proposed organization of work (E/CN.5/2019/1)
	3. Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly	Introduction of documentation under agenda item 3, including its sub-items (a) and (b) Report of the Secretary-General on the social dimensions of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (E/CN.5/2019/2)
	(a) Priority theme: addressing inequalities and challenges to social inclusion through fiscal, wage and social protection policies	Report of the Secretary-General on addressing inequalities and challenges to social inclusion through fiscal, wage and social protection policies (E/CN.5/2019/3)
	(b) Review of relevant United Nations plans and programmes of action pertaining to the situation of social groups	
	(i) World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons	
	(ii) Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities	Report of the Secretary-General on promoting the rights of persons with disabilities and strengthening the mainstreaming of disability in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (E/CN.5/2019/4)
	(iii) World Programme of Action for Youth	Report of the Secretary-General on policies and programmes involving youth (E/CN.5/2019/5)
	(iv) Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002	
	(v) Family issues, policies and programmes	Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the objectives of the International Year of the Family and its follow-up processes) (A/74/61-E/2019/4)
	3 (a) and (b)	Introductory statements General discussion begins
p.m.	3 (a) (*continued*)	High-level panel discussion on item 3 (a)

Date	*Agenda item*	*Documentation programme*
Tuesday, 12 February		
a.m.	3 (a) and (b) (*continued*)	Ministerial Forum on social protection
p.m.	3 (a) and (b) (*continued*)	General discussion
Wednesday, 13 February		
a.m.	3 (c) Emerging issues: the empowerment of people affected by natural and human-made disasters to reduce inequality: addressing the differential impact on persons with disabilities, older persons and youth	High-level panel discussion on item 3 (c)
p.m.	3 (b) (*continued*)	Interactive dialogue with senior United Nations officials of the United Nations system on the priority theme
Thursday, 14 February		
a.m.	3 (a) and (b) (*continued*)	General discussion
p.m.	4. Programme questions and other matters	
	(a) Proposed programme plan for 2020	
	(b) United Nations Research Institute for Social Development	Note by the Secretary-General on the nomination of members of the Board of the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (E/CN.5/2019/9)
		Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Board of the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (E/CN.5/2019/8)
	3 (a) and (b) (*continued*)	General discussion
Friday, 15 February		
a.m.		Informal consultations
		(*no plenary meeting*)
p.m.		Informal consultations
		(*no plenary meeting*)
		3 p.m.: deadline for submission of draft proposals
Week of 18–22 February 2018		
Monday, 18 February (United Nations floating holiday — no meeting of the Commission)		
Tuesday, 19 February		
a.m.	3 (a) and (b) (*continued*)	General discussion concludes
p.m.		Informal consultations
		(*no plenary meeting*)

Date	*Agenda item*	*Documentation programme*
Wednesday, 20 February		
a.m.		Informal consultations (*no plenary meeting*)
p.m.		Informal consultations (*no plenary meeting*)
Thursday, 21 February		
a.m.	3 (a) and (b)	Introduction of draft proposals Action on draft proposals
	5. Provisional agenda for the fifty-eighth session of the Commission	Adoption of the provisional agenda for the next session
	6. Adoption of the report of the Commission on its fifty-seventh session	Adoption of the report Closure of the session[a]
p.m.		Action on any outstanding draft proposals or other matters (if necessary)

[a] In accordance with Economic and Social Council decision 2002/210, the Commission, immediately following the closure of the fifty-seventh session, will hold the first meeting of its fifty-eighth session for the sole purpose of electing the new Chair and other members of the Bureau, in accordance with rule 15 of the rules of procedure of the functional commissions of the Council.

Annex II

Membership of the Commission for Social Development at its fifty-seventh session (2019)

(46 members; four-year term)

Membership of the fifty-seventh session	*Term expires at close of session in the year*
Algeria	2019
Austria	2019
Bangladesh	2020
Belarus	2020
Benin	2019
Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	2019
Brazil	2021
Bulgaria	2021
Burundi	2019
China	2021
Colombia	2019
Congo	2020
Côte d'Ivoire	2021
El Salvador	2020
France	2021
Ghana	2020
Haiti	2021
Iceland	2020
India	2021
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	2019
Iraq	2019
Israel	2019
Japan	2020
Kuwait	2021
Madagascar	2021
Malawi	2021
Mexico	2019
Namibia	2019

Membership of the fifty-seventh session	*Term expires at close of session in the year:*
Panama	2021
Paraguay	2020
Peru	2020
Portugal	2019
Qatar	2019
Republic of Korea	2020
Republic of Moldova	2019
Romania	2021
Russian Federation	2020
Rwanda	2020
Senegal	2020
Sudan	2021
Switzerland	2021
Turkmenistan	2021
United States of America	2020

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Commission for Social Development
Fifty-seventh session
11–21 February 2019
Item 3 of the provisional agenda*
Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly

Social dimensions of the New Partnership for Africa's Development

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted pursuant to Economic and Social Council resolution 2018/4 to review progress made in the social dimensions of the New Partnership for Africa's Development. Examined herein is progress in poverty eradication, reducing hunger and inequality, inclusive social development, peace and security and good governance. Also discussed are partnerships and resource mobilization, as well as the progress made in ensuring a coordinated implementation of Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Policy recommendations for the accelerated and sustained development of Africa are provided.

* E/CN.5/2019/1.

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I. Introduction

1. The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), adopted in 2001 by the African Union, has provided a vision and policy framework for Africa's development and integration into the world economy. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the African Union's transformative Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want are generating further momentum for action towards an inclusive, prosperous and peaceful world, in which no one is left behind, including, in particular, in Africa. This recurring report on the social dimensions of NEPAD contributes to tracking progress in achieving the goals contained in the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063.

II. Progress in eradicating poverty and reducing hunger and inequality

A. Poverty

2. Africa continues to make progress in reducing extreme poverty. According to the most recent estimates, extreme poverty in Africa fell to 34.9 per cent in 2015, from 45.2 per cent in 1990. In sub-Saharan Africa, extreme poverty declined to 41.1 per cent in 2015, from 54.3 per cent in 1990. In North Africa, poverty fell rapidly, to 2.2 per cent in 2015, from 12.9 per cent in 1990. Notwithstanding the progress made, 27 of the world's 28 poorest countries are located in sub-Saharan Africa, all with extreme poverty rates of more than 30 per cent. In general, the extreme poverty rate tends to be high (more than 50 per cent) in low-income and least developed countries, which are concentrated in sub-Saharan Africa.[1]

3. Notwithstanding falling poverty rates, the numbers of people living in extreme poverty has increased. In sub-Saharan Africa, the number grew from 277.51 million in 1990 to 413.25 million in 2015. This increase is due to rapid population growth, low levels of human capital and access to basic infrastructure. In addition, the impact of economic growth on poverty reduction has been low in many countries, given that economic growth is still dominated by natural resource extraction, which is capital intensive and a source of high income inequality.

4. If these trends in poverty levels and numbers continue, the average extreme poverty rate for sub-Saharan Africa will be more than 25 per cent in 2030, and nearly 9 of 10 extreme poor will reside in the region. In a very optimistic scenario in which economic growth reaches 8 per cent annually, the rate of extreme poverty in sub-Saharan Africa will still be 13.4 per cent in 2030, compared with an average of 0.4 per cent for the rest of the world.[2]

5. At the country level, Algeria, Egypt, Mauritius, Morocco, Seychelles and Tunisia have almost eliminated extreme poverty. Other non-resource-rich countries, such as Burkina Faso, Chad, Ethiopia, Guinea, Liberia, the Niger and the United Republic of Tanzania, have been successful in reducing poverty rates since 2000, at an annual pace that is similar to that experienced by China between 1996 and 2013, thanks in part to debt relief programmes such as the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative that helped to boost social spending. Other countries have also reduced poverty significantly by increasing agricultural outcomes and facilitating fertility

[1] World Bank, "PovalNet". Available at http://iresearch.worldbank.org/PovcalNet/home.aspx (accessed on 21 November 2018).

[2] World Bank, *Poverty and Shared Prosperity 2018: Piecing Together the Poverty Puzzle* (Washington, D.C., 2018).

decline. In Botswana, for example, extreme poverty decreased by 11.6 percentage points between the periods 2002–2003 and 2009–2010 thanks to these two factors.[3]

6. Through a multidimensional lens, which defines poverty by income, education and access to basic infrastructure, the poverty rate in sub-Saharan Africa is even higher. In 2013, an estimated 64.3 per cent of the population lived in multidimensional poverty. Sub-Saharan Africa also exhibits the world's highest degree of overlap among the various poverty dimensions. Consequently, a multipronged approach is required to eradicate poverty in the region, given that policy interventions that target exclusively one dimension may not reduce multidimensional poverty.

7. Decent work is a critical pathway for sustained poverty reduction. Notwithstanding some improvements, however, poverty remains high in Africa, even among those who work. The proportion of the extreme working poor (i.e., workers who live with less than $1.90 a day) was 32 per cent in 2017. This proportion is projected to decline to 31 per cent in 2018 and to 30 percent in 2019. Extreme working poverty rates are particularly high in sub-Saharan Africa, at 37 per cent in 2017, and much lower in North Africa, at 5 per cent. Overall, these rates represent a total of 140.6 million workers living in extreme poverty in Africa, including 137 million in sub-Saharan Africa, in 2017. These numbers are expected to rise if the current trend of rapid growth in the working-age population, coupled with little progress in working poverty reduction, continue.[4] In sub-Saharan Africa, poverty levels are higher for working young people than for working adults. A total of 42 per cent of young workers lived in extreme poverty in 2016, the highest working poverty rate for young people in the world.[3]

8. To spur further progress in eradicating poverty, it is vital for African countries to realize sustained and inclusive economic growth. This requires reducing inequality and diversifying the economy through structural transformation. A shift towards labour-intensive growth paths, accompanied by investment in human capital, is key, in particular in education, training and skills development for young people and children, women, people with disabilities and rural populations.

B. Hunger and food security

9. After a prolonged decline since 2000, hunger is on the rise in Africa, which makes it the region with the highest levels of hunger and food insecurity in the world. The prevalence of undernutrition, or the proportion of undernourished people, fell from 21.2 per cent to 18.3 per cent between 2005 and 2014 but increased to 20.4 per cent in 2017. In absolute terms, the number of undernourished people grew from 200 million in 2010 to 257 million in 2017. Undernutrition is most prevalent in sub-Saharan Africa in general, especially in East Africa, where 23.2 per cent and 31.4 per cent of the population, respectively, were undernourished in 2017. The main causes of these high and increasing levels include poverty, extreme weather events such as chronic droughts and flooding, conflicts, inadequate investment in agriculture and rising and volatile food prices.[5]

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[3] African Union Commission and Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, *Africa's Development Dynamics 2018: Growth, Jobs and Inequalities* (Addis Ababa and Paris, 2018).

[4] International Labour Organization, *World Employment and Social Outlook: Trends in 2018* (Geneva, 2018).

[5] Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and others, *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World: Building Climate Resilience for Food Security and Nutrition* (Rome, 2018).

10. In addition to undernutrition, severe food insecurity has been on the rise, in particular in sub-Saharan Africa. Between 2014 and 2017, the prevalence increased from 22.3 per cent to 29.8 per cent in Africa and from 25 per cent to 33.8 per cent in sub-Saharan Africa. The number of people experiencing severe food insecurity also rose during that period, from 260 million to 375 million in the whole of Africa.

11. Malnutrition, which undermines health and educational outcomes and economic productivity, also remains a persistent challenge. Africa is the continent where the prevalence of child stunting has decreased at the slowest pace. Between 2000 and 2017, the prevalence of child stunting decreased by 21 per cent in Africa, from 38.3 per cent to 30.3 per cent, while it decreased by 39 per cent in Asia and by 43 per cent in Latin America and the Caribbean. Africa is also the only continent where the number of stunted children under 5 years of age increased between 2000 and 2017, from 50.6 million to 58.7 million. Western Africa accounted for almost half of the increase.[6]

12. Along with persistent undernutrition, overweight is rising in Africa, which is a cause for concern. Overall, while the prevalence of overweight children under 5 years of age remains low in Africa, at 5 per cent in 2017, it increased significantly in North Africa and Southern Africa to reach high levels of 10.3 per cent and 13.7 per cent, respectively, in 2017. In absolute terms, the number of overweight children increased from 6.6 million in 2000 to 9.7 million in 2017 in Africa, with North and Southern Africa accounting for half of the increase. Moreover, globally, almost half of the 20 countries with the fastest-rising rates of adult obesity are located in Africa.[7]

13. Given that at least 60 per cent of Africa's population lives in rural areas and relies on agriculture for subsistence, African countries and their development partners have recognized that agriculture-led growth is critical to ending hunger and reducing poverty. In 2003, the African Union Assembly of Heads of State and Government adopted the Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Programme. Only 10 countries achieved the Programme commitment of allocating at least 10 per cent of annual public expenditure to agriculture, with Malawi and Ethiopia allocating the highest percentages, 17.6 per cent and 16.8 per cent, respectively, during the period 2015–2016.

14. In 2014, African leaders adopted the Malabo Declaration on Accelerated Agricultural Growth and Transformation for Shared Prosperity and Improved Livelihoods, which reconfirmed the positive contribution of agriculture to the development of the continent. African leaders also committed themselves to conducting a biennial agricultural review that involves tracking, monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the provisions of the Declaration. As part of this review, the 2017 inaugural biennial report on the implementation of the Declaration,[8] which outlines the performance of African Union member States during the period 2015–2016, showed that, of the 47 countries that had reported progress, 20 had obtained the minimum overall score of 3.94 of 10 to be on track for achieving the commitments by 2025. Among them, Rwanda was the best-performing country in implementing the seven commitments of the Declaration.

15. To eradicate hunger and improve food security and nutrition on the African continent, it is imperative that agriculture be at the centre of development agendas. Implementing the Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Programme and

[6] United Nations Children's Fund and others, "Levels and trends in child malnutrition: joint child malnutrition estimates — key findings of the 2018 edition" (2018).

[7] World Health Organization. Regional Office for Africa, *Nutrition in the WHO Africa Region* (Brazzaville, 2017).

[8] Available at https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/33005-doc-br_report_to_au_summit_draft_stc_eng.pdf (accessed on 21 November 2018).

the Malabo Declaration on Accelerated Agricultural Growth and Transformation for Shared Prosperity and Improved Livelihoods at the country level has, as the experiences of countries such as Ethiopia and Rwanda have shown, the potential to transform the agricultural sector on the entire African continent.

C. Inequality

16. High and growing inequalities are detrimental to long-term economic growth and poverty reduction. Inequality excludes sizeable segments of the population from participating in and benefiting from development, which goes against the pledge contained in the 2030 Agenda to "leave no one behind". Income inequality is, on average, higher in Africa than in the rest of the developing world. Lowering Africa's current Gini coefficient of 0.41 to Asia's 0.35 would lift an additional 130 million people out of extreme poverty.[3]

17. Trends in income inequality vary throughout the continent. In Southern Africa, income inequality has been reduced, but remains high because of very high initial levels. With 6 of the 10 most unequal countries in the world found in Southern Africa, this subregion has the highest income inequality of all African regions and one of the highest levels of income inequality in the world. In the 2010s, the Gini coefficient of the countries of the region was more than 0.50 in general. Southern Africa also has the biggest difference between the incomes of the richest 20 per cent of the population and the poorest 20 per cent. In Central Africa, income inequality has stalled at high levels for the past 15 years, with the Gini coefficient remaining at approximately 0.40 between the early 2000s and the early 2010s. The low level of tax revenue of the countries in this subregion, at only 11 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) in 2016, compared with an average of 16 per cent for all of Africa, probably limits the capacity of countries to redistribute for greater equality and social investment. In East Africa, while income inequality varies throughout the subregion, overall it increased between the 2000s and the 2010s. Mauritius, Rwanda and the United Republic of Tanzania are exceptions owing to social protection programmes and investment in education, skills and entrepreneurship development. In North Africa, income inequality remains at moderately low levels (Gini coefficient of 0.33 on average during the period 2010–2015). In West Africa, income inequality has been falling in general, and the average Gini coefficient reached 0.40 during the period 2014–2017, but it has increased and remains high in Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Nigeria. Based on the differences between the incomes of the richest and the poorest, Southern Africa has the highest level of inequality, North Africa the lowest level and East Africa, Central Africa and West Africa have comparable intermediate levels.[3]

18. Furthermore, inequality of opportunities remains high in Africa, in particular regarding access to basic services and productive resources such as education, health care and nutrition, water and sanitation, energy, information and communications technology (ICT) and finance and credit. Large urban-rural disparities in access to basic services also exist. In sub-Saharan Africa for example, the proportion of the households that have access to electricity is 70 per cent in urban areas, compared with 22 per cent in rural areas.[9]

19. Africa has made remarkable progress towards gender equality. The region has achieved near gender parity in primary school enrolment, and secondary education completion rates have increased in all regions for both girls and boys. The prevalence of child marriage has declined, and some countries have managed to delay the age of

[9] World Bank Group, *Africa's Pulse: An Analysis of Issues Shaping Africa's Economic Future*, No. 17, April 2018.

marriage among women.[10] The labour force participation rate of women in sub-Saharan Africa has increased slightly.

20. Fifteen sub-Saharan African countries posted improvements in the representation of women in national parliaments. In 2018, women account for 23.7 per cent of lower house seats in sub-Saharan Africa, compared with 19.8 percent in Asia and 18.6 per cent in the Arab States. Rwanda, where 61.3 per cent of lower house seats are held by women, has the highest representation of women in the world.[11] Ethiopia recently approved a new Cabinet, with 50 per cent female composition, including the country's first woman defence minister and first woman president.

21. Notwithstanding those developments, high gender inequality, which manifests itself in the economic, social, political and human development realms, persists in almost every African country. For example, African women are less likely to be employed than men, and when they are, they earn only 70 per cent of men's wages, on average. In nearly two thirds of countries, women are more likely to live in poverty and also more likely than men to report food insecurity. Effort is also still required to achieve gender parity in education, especially at the secondary and tertiary levels, except in North Africa.

III. Promoting inclusive social development

A. Access to quality education and skills development

22. Education is a major driver of development. Research has shown that increasing the years of schooling among adults 15 years of age and over by two years in developing countries would help to lift nearly 60 million people out of poverty and that achieving universal primary and secondary attainment within this group would lift more than 420 million out of poverty. These gains would reduce the number of poor globally by more than half.[12]

23. African countries continue to post significant gains in education. The number of students enrolled in primary school increased from 62 million in 1990 to 149 million in 2012. To enable more children to attend primary school, 15 sub-Saharan African countries have abolished school fees since 2000.[13] Owing to higher transition and retention rates, the lower secondary gross enrolment ratio increased from 24 per cent in 1999 to almost 50 per cent in 2012, and the upper secondary gross enrolment ratio increased from 22 per cent to 32 per cent during the same period. Larger increases were seen in poorer countries.[14]

24. A total of 21 per cent of primary school-age children, 37 per cent of lower secondary school-age adolescents and 58 per cent of upper secondary school-age

[10] Economic Commission for Africa and others, *2017 Africa Sustainable Development Report: Tracking Progress on Agenda 2063 and the Sustainable Development Goals* (Addis Ababa, 2017).

[11] Inter-Parliamentary Union, "Women in national parliaments: situation as of 1 October 2018". Available at http://archive.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm (accessed on 21 November 2018).

[12] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, "Reducing global poverty through universal primary and secondary education". Policy Paper No. 32/Fact Sheet No. 44 (Paris, 2017).

[13] Africa-America Institute, *State of Education in Africa Report 2015: A Report Card on the Progress, Opportunities and Challenges Confronting the African Education Sector* (New York, 2015).

[14] UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, *Promoting Lifelong Learning for All: The Experiences of Ethiopia, Kenya, Namibia, Rwanda and the United Republic of Tanzania* (Hamburg, 2018).

young people, however, were out of school in 2016.[15] A total of 41 per cent of primary school-age children did not complete primary school.[16] Approximately 123 primary school-age out-of-school girls were denied the right to education for every 100 boys in 2016,[15] and women still do not enrol in tertiary education as much as men do. Moreover, notwithstanding progress in enrolment, illiteracy remains high. In 2016, more than one in four young people in sub-Saharan Africa could not read. Approximately 87 per cent of children of primary school age did not reach the minimum proficiency level in reading in 2015 owing mainly to the quality of teaching and learning. The adult literacy rate remained at 65 per cent between 2000 and 2016.[16]

25. The lack of well-trained teachers is also a challenge with regard to meeting the educational needs of Africa. The proportion of teachers with adequate training was 36 per cent at the pre-primary level, 62 per cent at the primary level and 45 per cent at the secondary level. With only 22 per cent of primary schools and 49 per cent of lower secondary schools in sub-Saharan Africa having had access to electricity in 2015, infrastructure is another obstacle to improving education. Conflicts also disrupt school attendance. For example, terrorism-related attacks on teachers and education institutions by Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'Awati Wal-Jihad (Boko Haram) resulted in 611 teacher deaths and forced 19,000 students to flee between 2009 and 2015.

26. Furthermore, resources need to be mobilized in support of Africa's education and skills development. Currently, social spending on education also remains low. In 2015, the public education expenditure was 16.9 per cent of total public expenditure in sub-Saharan Africa.[16] In addition to paying for formal fees, households have to spend almost as much for such things as school supplies, learning materials and transportation.[17] The share of total international aid allocated to basic education in sub-Saharan Africa fell to 26 per cent in 2015, which is less than half of the level that it had received in 2002. Nevertheless, the region had more than half of the world's out-of-school children. By contrast, North Africa and Western Asia only had 9 per cent of all out-of-school children, and the share that this region received in total international aid allocated to basic education increased from 5 per cent in 2002 to 22 per cent in 2015.[16]

27. To improve school enrolment, attendance and completion rates and to reduce illiteracy, African countries should make education compulsory and improve access to and the quality of education. The successful structural transformation of the continent demands a skilled workforce, intensifying the need for educational initiatives that provide formal education and relevant technical and vocational skills training. African young people need to have a solid foundation in basic education and should have the opportunities to pursue higher educational levels. Countries must also continue to make the building of knowledge capital a focus of national visions and strategies for inclusive development.[18]

B. Achieving universal health coverage and curbing the outbreak of major diseases

28. Africa has made impressive progress in the health sector. The average life expectancy at birth for both sexes increased from 57 years in 2010 to 60 years in

[15] UNESCO Institute of Statistics, "One in five children, adolescents and youth is out of school", Fact Sheet No. 48 (Paris, 2018).

[16] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, *Global Education Monitoring Report 2017/2018: Accountability in Education — Meeting our Commitments* (Paris, 2017).

[17] World Bank, *World Development Report 2018: Learning to Realize Education's Promise* (Washington, D.C., 2018).

[18] World Bank, *Facing Forward: Schooling for Learning in Africa* (Washington, D.C., 2018).

2015. The crude birth rate and crude death rate per 1,000 population declined from 39.2 to 34.3 and from 13.7 to 8.9, respectively, during the period 2000–2015. In sub-Saharan Africa, neonatal mortality and under-five mortality rates per 1,000 live births also declined from 41 to 27 and 156 to 76, respectively, from 2000 to 2017.[19] Polio immunization coverage increased from 55 per cent in 2000 to 72 per cent in 2011. It has remained stagnant since then.

29. While the maternal mortality ratio is also declining, it remains high, at 542 per 100,000 live births. Only 49.6 per cent of reproductive-age women who are married or in a union had their family planning needs met during the period 2011–2015. Antenatal care coverage also remained alarmingly low. In 2015, only 54 per cent of pregnant women received the full life-saving antenatal care coverage. The region is also characterized by a very low skilled birth attendance rate, which was 54 per cent between 2005 and 2016. In 2018, the adolescent birth rate is the highest in sub-Saharan Africa, at 101 births per 1,000 women aged 15 to 19.[20]

30. The new HIV infection rate declined from 2.1 per 1000 in 2011 to 1.2 in 2016. The incidence rate in 2016, however, still represented 1.2 million new infections in absolute terms. The number of people receiving antiretroviral treatment increased from 2.1 million in 2007 to 13.8 million in 2016, demonstrating improvements in the performance of the antiretroviral treatment programme in the region. There were more than 1.3 million HIV-positive pregnant women in 2016. The proportion receiving antiretroviral treatment for the prevention of mother-to-child transmission increased to 68 per cent in 2016, from 50 per cent in 2008. While the HIV mortality rate per 100,000 population declined from 139 in 2011 to 71 in 2016, it remains high.

31. Malaria incidence and malaria mortality rates declined from 299 to 240 cases per 1,000 population and from 72 to 50 deaths per 100,000 population, respectively, during the period 2010-2016. There were approximately 194 million new malaria cases and 405,880 malaria deaths in 2016 in absolute numbers, showing the magnitude of the burden. Furthermore, the tuberculosis prevalence rate declined from 345 in 2011 to 340 per 100,000 population in 2014 and the tuberculosis mortality rate dropped from 47 in 2010 to 42 per 100,000 in 2016.[20]

32. Spontaneous outbreaks of diseases, such as the Ebola virus, pose an additional burden to countries. A new Ebola virus outbreak occurred in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in May 2018, resulting in 155 deaths. The security situation in the country has been undermining the response, raising the risk of the spread of the virus both within and outside the country.[21] Because the outbreak poses threats to neighbouring countries, the World Health Organization has responded by providing these countries with personnel and equipment. The outbreak is also a reminder for countries to invest in preparedness and engage in resource mobilization. Awareness-raising activities should also be undertaken to ensure a successful response.[22] African countries should strengthen their health systems and resilience to minimize the impact of such epidemics.

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[19] United Nations Children's Fund and others, *Levels and Trends in Child Mortality: Estimates Developed by the UN Inter-Agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation* (New York, 2018).

[20] World Health Organization, Regional Office for Africa, *Atlas of African Health Statistics 2018: Universal Health Coverage and the Sustainable Development Goals in the WHO Africa Region* (Brazzaville, 2018).

[21] World Health Organization, Regional Office for Africa, "Ebola virus disease: Democratic Republic of the Congo", External Situation Report 12, 23 October. (Brazzaville, 2018).

[22] World Health Organization, "Statement on the October 2018 meeting of the IHR Emergency Committee on the Ebola virus disease outbreak in the Democratic Republic of the Congo", 17 October 2018. Available at www.who.int/news-room/detail/17-10-2018-statement-on-the-meeting-of-the-ihr-emergency-committee-on-the-ebola-outbreak-in-drc.

33. Greater efforts are required to control noncommunicable diseases and their risk factors in Africa before they become the major causes of mortality and morbidity. Among the leading causes of death in the region, lower respiratory tract infections, HIV/AIDS, diarrhoeal diseases, stroke, ischaemic (coronary) heart disease, tuberculosis and malaria take the top ranks. Malaria dropped significantly, from fourth to seventh position, between 2000 and 2015 owing to the effective malaria control programmes in the region, and HIV will also be dropping from the list of the leading causes of death if the current progress in HIV control programmes is sustained. These are welcome developments.

C. Demographic dividend

34. Africa has the fastest rate of population growth in the world, and its large working-age population continues to grow rapidly. Africa's population increased from 228 million in 1950 to 1.26 billion in 2017 and is projected to reach 2.5 billion by 2050. The population between 15 and 24 years of age was 239 million in 2017 and is expected to reach 461 million by 2050.[23] The working-age population (15 to 64 years of age) is also estimated to grow by 70 per cent, to reach 450 million by 2035, which is a window of opportunity for the region. This demographic change, however, is accompanied by several challenges such as high unemployment, low job creation, rapid urbanization and inadequate access to health care, education and infrastructure. Failure to leverage this window of opportunity might therefore lead to instability and a continued brain drain.

35. Africa can reap a demographic dividend if this window of opportunity is harnessed and the potential of the growing population of young people is successfully tapped. To translate this increase into inclusive and sustained economic growth, African countries need to generate sufficient decent jobs to absorb the large working-age population. The agriculture sector, which employs most of the working-age population, should be modernized, thereby facilitating industrialization. To absorb the excess labour that will be shed from agriculture as a result of modernization, however, investment should also be made in labour-intensive manufacturing. Countries should design policies that foster human capital accumulation and empower the poor and low-skilled workers to take advantage of opportunities arising with structural transformation. Countries should invest in health, education, innovation, skills development and women in order to promote a healthy, educated and skilled workforce.[14] Sexual and reproductive health education and service provision for adolescents and young people is also vital for retaining them in school and helping them to make informed choices. It is also important for the countries to increase the role of the private sector and attract foreign direct investment (FDI) to contribute to job creation.[24]

D. Social protection

36. Social protection is a means of alleviating poverty and a policy instrument for inclusive and sustainable socioeconomic development. Notwithstanding its recognized contribution to reducing poverty and fostering improvements in education and health, social protection coverage remains low in Africa. The effective coverage, which is measured as the proportion of the total population that is actively contributing to a social insurance scheme or receiving benefits, is 18 per cent of the

[23] United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *World Population Prospects: The 2017 Revision, Key Findings and Advance Tables* (New York, 2017).

[24] African Development Bank, *African Economic Outlook 2018* (Abidjan, 2018).

total population. Many countries have made social protection a key element of their national development strategies. While all African countries have statutory social security schemes, the coverage is limited to workers in the formal economy. Countries such as Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Namibia and Seychelles have successfully developed universal non-contributory pension schemes and countries such as Algeria, Cabo Verde, Mauritius and South Africa have achieved universal coverage by a mix of contributory and non-contributory programmes.[25]

37. A small proportion of the working population that is formally employed has access to formal social security contributory schemes for pensions, employment injury, maternity benefits and health protection. Workers in the informal economy, however, rely on individual coping strategies that are usually expensive and ineffective. This segment of the population could fall into poverty owing to sudden shocks such as illness or the loss of a job. Evidence has shown that low social assistance scheme coverage of the active population hampers the positive impact of such schemes on productivity and economic development.

38. Only 16 per cent of children in Africa are covered by any social protection schemes. In addition, 40.8 per cent of African countries offer no child or family benefit programme. Many of the existing schemes cover only a small proportion of children, who are either poor and vulnerable or whose parents work in formal employment. Most of the countries with data available cover less than 20 per cent of childbearing women. Some countries have recently moved from employer liability to social insurance coverage for maternal benefits.

39. Unemployment benefit coverage for the working-age population is also low. Only 5.6 per cent of the unemployed receive such benefits, owing mainly to the high levels of informal employment and the lack of unemployment benefits. Some 30 per cent of older persons are covered by pensions. Countries such as Botswana, Lesotho, Mauritius, Namibia and Seychelles provide universal pensions to all older persons.

40. To improve coverage, countries need to boost social spending on social protection systems, including floors. During the period 2010–2015, social protection expenditure, excluding health, was very low, at 5.9 per cent of GDP in Africa and 4.5 per cent of GDP in sub-Saharan Africa. North Africa had a higher proportion, at 7.6 per cent of GDP, which is comparable to that of Asia and the Pacific, at 7.4 per cent.[25]

41. African countries should invest in social protection and extend it to workers in the informal sector as a means of formalizing and improving their working conditions. It is also necessary for sustainability to be integrated into social protection programmes to enhance their effectiveness.

IV. Promoting structural transformation and inclusive growth

A. Productive employment and decent work

42. Full and productive employment and decent work for all is an important pathway for inclusive growth and sustainable development. Notwithstanding Africa's impressive rates of growth for close to two decades, the 2008 global recession slowed job growth and poverty eradication efforts. While growth has rebounded, the pace is not fast enough to create enough wealth and jobs to help to reduce poverty.

43. Africa's unemployment rate was 7.9 per cent in 2017 and will likely stay the same in 2018, with North Africa having much higher rates than sub-Saharan Africa.

[25] International Labour Organization, *World Social Protection Report 2017–2019: Universal Social Protection to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals* (Geneva, 2017).

Owing to increases in the working-age population and the labour force, the number of unemployed is expected to increase to 38.9 million in 2018, from 37.8 million in 2017.[4]

44. With an unemployment rate of 11.7 per cent in 2017, North Africa has the highest unemployment rate in the world. Although the rate is expected to decline slightly, to 11.5 per cent in 2018, the number of unemployed in the subregion will remain at 8.7 million. Unemployment is particularly high among young people and women, and the unemployment rate for young people, which was 25 per cent in 2017, is the highest in the world. Young people constitute more than 34 per cent of the total unemployed population, while representing only 15 per cent of the labour force in the subregion. In addition, the unemployment rate for women is more than twice that of men owing to rooted gender roles and sociocultural discrimination that restrict women's access to decent jobs. The unemployment rate for women is expected to increase further in the subregion as a result of these structural barriers.

45. Sub-Saharan Africa's unemployment rate of 7.2 per cent in 2017 is forecasted to remain the same in 2018. The number of unemployed, however, is projected to increase from 29.1 million in 2017 to 30.2 million in 2018 and 31.3 million in 2019 owing to rapid labour force growth. The relatively low unemployment rate in sub-Saharan Africa masks heterogeneity among countries. Unemployment rates are therefore much higher in some countries, for example, South Africa, where the rate stood at 27.7 per cent in 2017. Another problem masked by the relatively low unemployment rate is that most of the working population of the region is in vulnerable employment or underemployed in the informal economy, which is characterized by high levels of poverty, inequality and decent work deficits. Owing to widespread informality and the almost non-existence of social protection, people are pressured to take up any employment opportunity, regardless of the working conditions. In 2018, the vulnerable employment rate is expected to reach more than 72 per cent, making it the highest in the world. The number of people in vulnerable forms of employment is also expected to reach 279 million people. The region also has one of the highest rates of informality outside the agricultural sector, ranging from 34 per cent in South Africa to 90.6 per cent in Benin.

46. The persistent high levels of unemployment among young people and women in North Africa and the pervasive poor-quality employment in sub-Saharan Africa, where the working-age population is young, growing and poorly educated, underscore the urgent need to invest in education and skills training for young people, tackling discrimination, closing the gender gap in both labour markets and education and promoting efficient school-to-work transitions. Gains in these areas will better position the continent to reap a demographic dividend offered by a growing population.

B. Structural transformation

47. Inclusive structural transformation offers Africa the best path to prosperity. Structural transformation lies at the heart of policy to solve Africa's huge unemployment challenge, as well as decent work deficits and low incomes. Given varying natural resource endowments throughout the continent, countries can pursue agriculture-led or industrialization-led structural transformation by shifting economic activity from low-productivity subsistence agriculture to higher-productivity manufacturing and industry sectors. Structural transformation, however, has happened at a very low pace in Africa, especially in sub-Saharan Africa. Notwithstanding the continent's strong economic growth and rapid urbanization, Africa is underindustrialized, informality remains widespread, productivity is low and

factors of production, namely, land and labour, are misallocated.[26] For example, the industry share of employment is estimated to be only 13.5 per cent in 2018.[27] The existing manufacturing sector is dominated by small and informal firms characterized by very low productivity, and access to land is limited for productive firms.

48. Diversifying the economy by developing labour-intensive manufacturing and services sectors such as textile and apparel production, agro-industry and agro-processing, including horticulture, food processing and tradable services, such as tourism, transport and ICT-enabled ones, are some of the new pathways towards structural transformation in Africa. Several non-resource-rich countries such as Ethiopia, Mauritius, Morocco and Rwanda have successfully followed the above pathways by creating an environment conducive to investment in quality infrastructure, industrial parks, education and skills development and land titling and access. They have also adopted an "export-push strategy" by developing a package of trade and exchange rate policies, public investment, regulatory reforms and institutional changes designed to increase the share of non-traditional exports in GDP. By doing so, they generated growth spikes and decent jobs, and their examples can provide useful lessons for the entire continent. In addition to creating jobs in modern agriculture, industry and services, they implemented policies that empowered the poor and the low-skilled workers to take advantage of the new opportunities that arise with structural transformation. African countries can also leverage rising incomes, urbanization and growing food consumption in cities by tapping into local, regional and global value chains relating to the processing of agricultural products. Investment in tourism and ICT will also raise living standards.

49. Mobilizing domestic savings in support of productive investment, improving tax policies and the collection of tax revenue, enhancing the effectiveness of public spending and combating illicit financial flows are some of the means available to implement the above strategies. For example, domestic savings represented $422 billion annually during the period 2009–2016 in Africa, which is 20 per cent of the continent's GDP. In addition, the continent mobilized $312 billion in tax revenue, or approximately 1.7 times more than the $185 billion in external financial inflows, in 2016.

50. Africa also needs to speed regional integration and intra-Africa trade in order to benefit from larger market opportunities. At approximately 10 per cent of Africa's total trade, intra-Africa trade is very low, with 40 per cent in North America and 60 per cent in Western Europe. More than 80 per cent of Africa's exports are shipped to China, the United States of America and the European Union. To boost intra-African trade, African Union member countries signed the African Continental Free Trade Area in 2018, focusing on five services priority sectors: transport, communication, financial, tourism and business services. A total of 49 countries have signed the agreement and 6 have ratified it. If all 55 African Union member countries join the treaty, then it will create a bloc with a total GDP of $2.5 trillion and a market of 1.2 billion people.

C. Infrastructure development

51. Both the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 include an emphasis on the importance of infrastructure development for achieving socioeconomic development. Africa's infrastructure is behind that of other regions in terms of quantity, affordability and

[26] Manabu Nose, "Road to industrialized Africa: role of efficient factor market in firm growth", IMF Working Paper No. WP/18/184 (Washington, D.C., International Monetary Fund, 2018).

[27] International Labour Organization, Key Indicators of the Labour Market database. Available at www.ilo.org/ilostat (accessed on 21 November 2018).

quality, owing mainly a to lack of investment. The continent's infrastructure investment needs are estimated at $130 billion to $170 billion annually. The financing gap amounts to $68 billion to $108 billion annually. Access to basic infrastructure is also limited. In 2016, only 42 per cent of African households had access to electricity.[9] In 2017, only 22 per cent of the population used the Internet.[28]

52. Aside from limited access, infrastructure services are also more expensive in Africa than in other developing regions. In Africa, manufacturing enterprises pay, on average, $0.20 per kWh for electricity, which is approximately four times higher than in the rest of the world; road freight tariffs per km are two to four times higher than in the United States; travel times along key export corridors are two to three times longer than in Asia; telephone charges are approximately four times higher than in South Asia; and Internet costs much more, with the price of 1 GB of data amounting to 18 per cent of an average citizen's income, compared with only 3 per cent in Asia.[28]

53. Significant basic infrastructure inequalities also exist between rural and urban areas. Rural areas are behind urban areas in terms of access to clean water and sanitation, electricity, roads, health and education services and connectivity. In Southern Africa, for example, during the period 2010–2016, while 78 per cent of the population in urban areas had electricity, only 20 per cent had access, on average, in rural areas.[3] Rural women and girls are particularly disadvantaged.

54. The poor state of infrastructure development in Africa has both economic and social repercussions. It results in productivity loss and removes up to 2 per cent from Africa's average per capita growth rates. Poor infrastructure also leads to lower social development, with higher child mortality, for example, driven by low access to clean water and electricity.24 To address the continent's infrastructure deficits, African leaders adopted the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa. Since its launch in 2012, the Programme has boosted individual countries' investment in public infrastructure projects. For example, between 2015 and 2016, while overall commitments to Africa's infrastructure from all reported sources declined from $78.9 billion to $62.5 billion, the budget allocations from African Governments increased from $24.0 to $26.3 billion. The amount invested, however, varies widely from one subregion to the other. Central Africa, for example, invests the least in infrastructure per inhabitant in Africa, notwithstanding its great need. In 2016, just 2 per cent of the regional GDP ($6.3 billion) was used to finance projects, a proportion that is twice as low as that of the other subregions.[29]

55. In the context of decreasing infrastructure financing in Africa, it is important to identify new types of funding and new investors. To fund infrastructure projects, African countries now have other options than foreign aid, such as remittances, private grants from philanthropists and tax revenue. Sovereign wealth funds, pension funds, market finance and FDI are other possible sources of infrastructure financing.[24]

V. Promoting good governance and peace and security

56. Good governance and peace and security are critical prerequisites for inclusive and sustainable development. Effective governance requires that the government and other public institutions be inclusive, participatory and accountable to the people. Compared with the rest of the world, African citizens tend to have low rates of net satisfaction with their public services, as noted in the previous report of the Secretary-

[28] International Telecommunication Union, "ICT facts and figures 2017" (Geneva, 2017).

[29] Infrastructure Consortium for Africa, *Infrastructure Financing Trends in Africa — 2016* (Abidjan, 2017).

General on the social dimensions of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (E/CN.5/2018/2).

57. Notwithstanding the above, African countries have made advances in overall governance by supporting the African Peer Review Mechanism, a voluntary self-assessment tool designed to promote more effective governance in four thematic areas: democracy and political governance, corporate governance, economic governance and management and socioeconomic governance. By January 2018, 37 African countries had voluntarily adhered to the Mechanism and 21 had completed their self-assessments and been peer reviewed. Progress in implementing the national programmes of action resulting from those reviews has been noted.

58. Africa is experiencing increased democratization and becoming safer over the long run, as the steady decrease in the amount of conflicts and resultant deaths show.[30] Challenges remain, however. Conflicts persist in some countries, undermining peace and security and democratic gains.[31] Political exclusion remains a source of violent conflict, as noted by the Secretary-General in his report on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa (A/73/273-S/2018/566).

59. The outbreak or recurrence of crises and violent conflicts have a negative impact on populations and undermine institutions and capacities for peace and development and for the advancement of sustainable and inclusive development. With a view to assisting African countries in averting such events, the United Nations and the African Union are making progress in institutional coordination and signed the Joint United Nations-African Union Framework for Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security in 2017. They also signed the African Union-United Nations Framework for the Implementation of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in 2018. The United Nations continues to work towards ensuring coherence in the implementation of these two Frameworks and their action plans.

60. African countries continue to improve institutions and regulatory environments, in line with NEPAD governance objectives and priorities. That includes tackling corruption. The African Union made 2018 the African Anti-Corruption Year, with the theme of "Winning the fight against corruption: a sustainable path to Africa's transformation". African institutions, organizations and citizens are urged to embark on a journey to address the urgent need to curb corruption.

VI. Mobilizing resources for development

61. Domestic resource mobilization is of paramount importance to Africa's development aspirations. Good progress has been made in improving the mobilization of tax revenue. The average tax-to-GDP ratio was 18.2 per cent in 2016, the same level as in 2015. This represents a strong improvement from 13.1 per cent in 2000.[32] Tax revenue in absolute terms increased 2.3 per cent from 2015/16 to 2018/19. The improved tax-to-GDP ratio, however, still falls below the requirement of the optimal threshold to finance development of 25 per cent.[24] The continent still faces obstacles to raising this ratio, such as poor governance, weak customs and tax institutions,

[30] Gilles Olakounlé Yabi, "Peace and security in Africa", ISPI Background Paper No. 4 (Italian Institute for International Political Studies, 2016).

[31] African Union, "Decisions, declarations and resolutions", thirtieth Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union, 28–29 January 2018. Available at https://au.int/sites/default/files/decisions/33908-assembly_decisions_665_-_689_e.pdf (accessed on 21 November 2018).

[32] Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, *Revenue Statistics in Africa 1990–2016* (Paris, 2018).

inadequate awareness among taxpayers and high informality. Countries can increase their resource mobilization efforts and boost tax revenue by minimizing tax exemptions and rebates, increasing tax compliance, building the capacities of institutions and curbing illicit financial flows, fraud and corruption.

62. The ratio of expenditure to GDP increased between 2008 and 2015, while total government revenue to GDP remained the same, increasing fiscal deficits. Concessional financing has decreased since the 2008 global recession. This has resulted in countries financing deficits through loans, thereby increasing public debt levels. The public debt ratios have begun to increase after a long period of decline that was supported by the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative and the Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative. In 73 per cent of the countries, the general government gross debt increased during the period 2013–2016, although only a few countries that had benefited from the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative recorded debt accumulation beyond the Initiative's level, notwithstanding the increase in debt levels.[24] It is therefore imperative for countries to prioritize containing debt accumulation, taking into account their financing needs and their ability to repay as their economy grows.

63. Africa's current account deficits also steadily increased between 2009 and 2015, owing mainly to trade deficits. This has raised concerns about their sustainability, given that unsustainable current account deficits are an indicator of a poor state of the economy, which discourages FDI. Large current account deficits also increase the risk of a currency crisis and the accumulation of foreign debt. Africa is heavily dependent on foreign sources, which include FDI, portfolio investment, remittances, official development assistance (ODA) and external debt for the financing of its current account deficits. Remittances have been the largest and most stable source of its financial flows since 2010, accounting for one third of the total external financial inflows. FDI inflows have been increasing, but ODA has remained a large source of financing in many African countries.

64. In 2017, initial estimates for bilateral ODA to Africa was approximately $29 billion, with aid to sub-Saharan Africa at some $25 billion, reflecting an increase of approximately 3 per cent in both.[33] While the percentage of aid to sub-Saharan Africa channelled through the multilateral system and civil society organizations is increasing, country programmable aid and flows continued to decline. ODA as a share of gross national income remained low, and the commitment by most of the Development Assistance Committee members to the least developed countries is far from being met. Gross bilateral ODA to Africa declined by 10 per cent and to sub-Saharan Africa by 13 per cent in real terms between 2011 and 2016. The top five aid recipients in sub-Saharan Africa in 2016 were Ethiopia, Kenya, the United Republic of Tanzania, South Sudan and Nigeria. Aid fell by 60 per cent or more in real terms in the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eritrea, Mauritius and Togo.[34]

VII. Progress in coherent and coordinated implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063

65. The importance of multi-stakeholder and collaborative partnerships has been emphasized in both the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063. There is a strong need for an

[33] Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, "Development aid stable in 2017 with more sent to poorest countries", 9 April 2018. Available at www.oecd.org/development/financing-sustainable-development/development-finance-data/ODA-2017-detailed-summary.pdf (accessed on 21 November 2018).

[34] Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, *Development Co-operation to Leave No One Behind: A Snapshot of DAC Member Approaches* (Paris, 2018).

effective partnership between the United Nations system and the African Union to ensure that both Agendas are aligned with other internationally agreed development frameworks and are mainstreamed and integrated into national planning frameworks. A harmonized and integrated approach will help to avoid duplication, optimize resource use and mobilize the support of domestic and external development partners and stakeholders.

66. In view of this, the United Nations and the African Union have been working closely to strengthen synergies. The conditions for cooperation between them to promote inclusive growth for Africa's sustainable development and transformation are set out under the African Union-United Nations Framework for the Implementation of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The organizations endorsed the Framework as the foundation for stronger coordination to achieve the mutual strategic intents of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063. They will be carrying out joint activities and programmes for the effective implementation, tracking and monitoring of and reporting on the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063. The activities and programmes prioritized under the Framework will be included in the relevant workplans of the two organizations, subject to their relevant mandates and the availability of funds and resources, and will be implemented in accordance with their relevant rules and procedures, in particular the mandatory review processes.[35]

67. This cooperation has provided a strong incentive for the United Nations, in particular the Economic Commission for Africa, the African Union and the African Development Bank, as a financial institution, to work in synergy. It has also laid the foundation for implementing the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development and further resource mobilization through innovative approaches. Partnership is also evident in the form of full support for the implementation of development programmes and projects of the African Union, including the NEPAD Programme, by the United Nations system based on the framework of the Regional Coordination Mechanism for Africa. To deepen inter-agency coherence, the United Nations has realigned the clusters of the Mechanism to deal with the major themes of both the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063, as noted in the report on United Nations system support for the African Union and its NEPAD Programme (E/ECA/COE/37/10). The United Nations country teams, in coordination with governments, will also ensure that a coherent and integrated system-wide United Nations response is set up to support the national development priorities.

VIII. Conclusions and recommendations

68. Going forward, combating inequality is a necessary step to eradicating extreme poverty everywhere and achieving other Sustainable Development Goals. African countries must therefore prioritize policies and strategies that promote structural economic transformation, inclusive, equitable, sustained and sustainable growth, and employment creation and social protection. Countries should also modernize agriculture by boosting yields and productivity per worker and should invest in critical infrastructure. Lastly, countries should promote equal access to quality education and health services and promote women's empowerment and gender equality and strengthen good governance.

[35] Economic Commission for Africa, *African Union-United Nations Framework for the Implementation of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (Addis Ababa, 2018). Available at www.uneca.org/sites/default/files/images/african_union_-_un_framework_27_jan_18.pdf (accessed on 21 November 2018).

69. To further promote social progress in Africa, the Commission for Social Development may wish to consider the following recommendations:

(a) **African countries should actively promote inclusive structural transformation through industrialization and should boost agriculture productivity in order to spur equitable and sustained economic growth, eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, combat inequality and create decent jobs for all;**

(b) **African countries should invest in human capital development, especially in education and skills training, and universal health coverage and should protect populations against preventable infectious diseases;**

(c) **To prevent poverty and leave no one behind, African countries should invest in social protection by establishing or strengthening nationally appropriate social protection systems that cover individuals throughout the life cycle. In particular, coverage should be extended to children, mothers with young children, persons with disabilities and other vulnerable populations, those living in rural areas and those who are unemployed or working in the informal economy;**

(d) **Countries should also encourage domestic private investment by leveraging domestic savings and remittances and improving rules for public investment, strengthen regional integration by operationalizing the African Continental Free Trade Area and curb illicit financial flows;**

(e) **African countries should advance peace and security and foster good economic and political governance by increasing the accountability and transparency of administrative data and public services, improving the business environment and investing in upgrading institutional capability, including statistical capacity, in order to support the monitoring of and reporting on the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 in a coordinated and coherent manner;**

(f) **Development partners, including the United Nations system, should continue to support the implementation of Africa's development priorities as set out in the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063. The United Nations system should continue to provide support to Africa in a coordinated and coherent manner, including through the Regional Coordination Mechanism for Africa and its realigned clusters, and the country Resident Coordinator system to improve policy coherence at the regional and country levels. The United Nations system can also enhance its support to countries by further improving the quality of policy research and knowledge products and technical assistance to strengthen national capacities.**

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Addressing inequalities and challenges to social inclusion through fiscal, wage and social protection policies

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted pursuant to Economic and Social Council resolution E/2018/3. It summarizes the latest trends in global, cross-country and within-country inequality and highlights how countries have used fiscal, wage and social protection policies to reduce inequality and address challenges to social inclusion. It also contains recommendations on how countries can make further progress on these issues.

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I. Introduction

1. High income inequality is harmful for the pace and sustainability of growth over time, as it undermines the productivity and dynamism of the economy because of suboptimal investments in education and health.[1] Greater income inequality is associated with diminished intergenerational mobility and reduces the impact of growth on poverty reduction. It also undermines social cohesion and trust in socio-political systems. Deep social disenchantment and political instability have also been fomented in countries where the process of globalization, liberalization and economic growth have left some population groups behind. Issues of equity, lack of equal opportunity and voice, persistent unemployment and inclusion were brought to the forefront of public attention by uprisings and mass protest movements that followed the failure of markets, particularly the 2008 global recession.[2] The rise in income and wealth inequality has led to a growing global consensus on the imperative to combat rising inequality and address social exclusion.

II. Inequalities posing challenges to social inclusion and sustainable development for all

A. Trends in income and wealth inequality

2. Global inequality levels remain very high despite sharp falls in the recent past.[3] Similarly, income inequality between countries has also been falling since 1990. However, average within-country inequality has been rising in many regions of the world.[4] Income inequality has increased in almost all regions since 1980 and high and rising inequality within countries has resulted in the global top 1 per cent of earners capturing twice as much of the growth in global income as the 50 per cent poorest individuals.[5] Although the bottom 50 per cent of the world's population has seen its income grow, it only captured 12 per cent of total growth between 1980 and 2016, while the top 1 per cent captured 27 percent. The income share of the global bottom 50 per cent also stagnated at around 9 per cent during this period. The 2008 global recession exacerbated the rise in income inequality, notably in countries where output and employment losses were more pronounced.[6]

3. In terms of wealth inequality, the wealth share of the world's top 1 per cent increased to 33 per cent in 2016, from 28 per cent in 1980. If the world is to follow the combined experience of China, Europe and the United States of America, the richest 1 per cent are on track to own 39 per cent of the world's wealth by 2050, from 33 per cent in 2016.[7] Eighty-two per cent of the wealth generated in 2017 went to the

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[1] J. Ostry, A. Berg and C. Tsangarides, "Redistribution, inequality, and growth", IMF Staff Discussion Note 14/02 (February 2014).

[2] *Report on the World Social Situation 2013: Inequality Matters* (United Nations publication, Sales No. 13.IV.2).

[3] The term "global inequality" refers to the relative inequality of incomes among all peoples of the world no matter where they live.

[4] Christoph Lakner and Branko Milanovic, "Global income distribution: from the fall of the Berlin Wall to the great recession", *World Bank Economic Review*, vol. 30, No. 2, pp. 203–232.

[5] Facundo Alvaredo and others, *World Inequality Report 2018* (World Inequality Lab, 2017). Available from https://wir2018.wid.world/download.html.

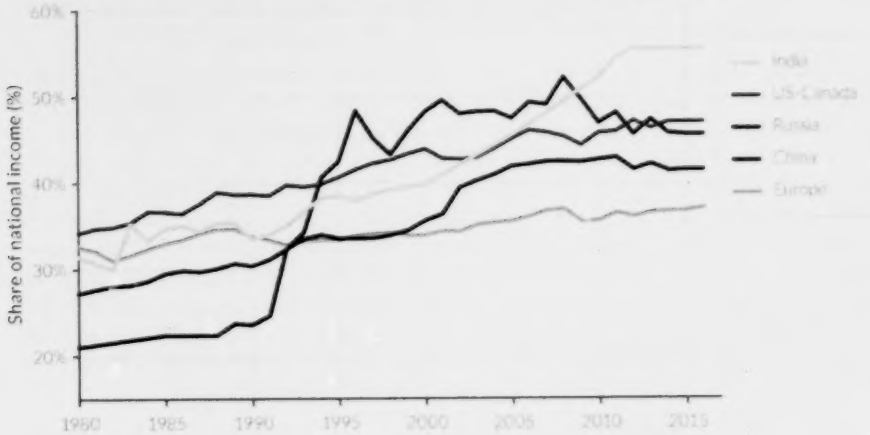
[6] International Monetary Fund (IMF), *World Economic Outlook: Challenges to Steady Growth* (October 2018).

[7] Facundo Alvaredo and others, note 5 above.

top 1 per cent, while the 3.7 billion people who make up the poorest half of the world saw no increase in their wealth.[8]

4. The global rise in income inequality has occurred at vastly different rates across regions. Since 1980, Europe has experienced a moderate increase. In contrast, income inequality rose sharply in North America and Asia, while Latin America, the Middle East and sub-Saharan Africa retain some of the world's highest income inequality levels,[9] in spite of a decline in inequality in 17 sub-Saharan Africa countries between 1991 and 2011.[10] The Middle East has replaced Latin America and the Caribbean as the most unequal region in the world. The figure below shows how inequality has been rising everywhere, though at different speeds.

Top 10 per cent income shares across the world, 1980–2016



Source: Facundo Alvaredo and others, *World Inequality Report 2018* (World Inequality Lab, 2017).

5. Since 1980, cross-country inequality has increased, but began to trend downwards after 2000. Overall, income inequality among countries has been shifting towards convergence between developed and developing countries.[11] This convergence is mainly due to rapid growth in Asia, notably China and India, coupled with slow growth in Western Europe. Rapid growth in China and India has resulted in strong income growth of the poorest half of the global population. Furthermore, average national incomes in sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America have fallen behind the world average since 1980.

6. While global inequality may have declined, within-country income inequality rose in many countries, although the overall picture varies depends on the time period and indicator used. Rising income inequality has occurred at different speeds, with North America, China, India and the Russian Federation posting some of the most rapid increases since 1980.[12] In some countries, spatial inequality across regions has

[8] Oxfam International, *Reward Work, Not Wealth* (Oxford, January 2018).

[9] Facundo Alvaredo and others, note 5 above.

[10] United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *Income Inequality Trends in sub-Saharan Africa* (New York, 2017). Available from www.africa.undp.org/content/ dam/rba/docs/Reports/ undp-rba_Income%20Inequality%20in%20SSA_Chapter%201.pdf.

[11] François Bourguignon, *The Globalization of Inequality* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2015).

[12] Facundo Alvaredo and others, note 5 above, and World Bank, *Poverty and Shared Prosperity 2018: Piecing Together the Poverty Puzzle* (Washington, D.C., 2018), available from https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/30418/9781464813306.pdf.

become more pronounced, along with the emergence of economically distressed regions and concentrated inequality in cities and towns.

B. Trends in non-income inequality

7. Income inequality is but one of several dimensions of inequality, including inequalities of access and opportunity in relation to education and health services, productive assets, financial services and political representation. These inequalities are interrelated and mutually reinforcing, resulting in significant differences in various outcomes such as overall well-being and lifetime earnings across different groups. For instance, people in poor health spend fewer years being gainfully employed, earn less, and their lifetime earnings are lower compared to those of healthy workers. Poor health reduces the lifetime earnings of less-educated men by 33 per cent, compared to a reduction of 17 per cent for highly-educated men.[13]

8. These inequalities persist even though the world has seen remarkable improvements in health outcomes. The overall global trends show convergence in outcomes such as life expectancy at birth, child mortality and average years of education. On average, people are living longer, with life expectancy at birth increasing to 70.8 years in 2010–2015, from 58.1 in 1970–1975. The gap in life expectancy at birth between the more developed regions and the less developed regions narrowed to 9.3 years in 2010–2015, from 16.4 years in 1970–1975. Despite these health gains, significant disparities persist. Children born in sub-Saharan Africa face higher odds of dying before age 5 than children born in other major world regions. Within countries, disparities in health also exist among individuals and groups. In many countries, where one lives also makes an enormous difference in terms of how long one lives, especially when the individual is poor.

9. The world is more educated than ever before. There has been a steady increase in the average level of educational attainment across countries, with a dramatic rise in schooling in developing countries. Among the global population aged over 15, the average number of years of schooling increased to 7.89 in 2010, from 4.39 years in 1970. Differences between developed and developing countries have also declined, but the gap in the average number of years remains high (4.1 years in 2010), having narrowed by less than 1 year since 1950. In developing countries, the average number of years of schooling increased to 7.2 in 2010, from 3.35 in 1970. In advanced countries, average years of schooling jumped to 11.30 in 2010, from 7.64 in 1970.[14] Further, group-based inequalities remain an important aspect of within-country inequalities. In India, a 20- to 24-year-old woman from a poor, rural household is 21.8 times less likely than one from a rich urban household to have attended school and 5.1 times more likely to have married before turning 18 years of age.[15] There are also large generational and gender gaps. In South Asia, the ratio of years of schooling among females to males was 68.6 per cent in 2010, compared to 80.0 per cent in sub-Saharan Africa and 98.3 per cent in Europe and Central Asia.

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[13] OECD, *Preventing Ageing Unequally* (Paris, 2017). Available from www.oecd-ilibrary.org/employment/preventing-ageing-unequally_9789264279087-en.

[14] www.barrolee.com/data/yrsch.htm.

[15] United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), *Turning Promises into Action: Gender Equality in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (United States, 2018).

10. To expand and deepen financial inclusion for historically unserved or underserved population segments and regions, many countries are promoting the uptake of mobile money and expanding the coverage of banks.[16]

III. Inequality, social inclusion and fiscal policies

A. Effects of tax and spending policies on inequality and social inclusion

11. Fiscal policy is mainly understood as governments' management of tax revenues and their expenditures and benefits systems, including transfers and subsidies. When these policies are inclusive, they can be powerful tools for reducing income inequality and promoting inclusive growth. Fiscal policy can also address challenges to social inclusion by equalizing the opportunities or terms on which individuals and groups take part in society. This includes improving people's capabilities, promoting equality of opportunities for education, health and employment and improving access to quality basic infrastructure. It also entails removing barriers to access to financial services. To be effective, policymakers should examine the effects of tax and spending measures together, instead of in isolation. They should ensure that the size and composition of total government spending devoted to social expenditures is pro-poor, equalizing and targeted at effective programmes. Equally important is the progressivity of all taxes.

12. In a 2018 study of 29 low- and middle-income countries from around 2010, it was found that fiscal systems reduced income inequality in all cases but increased poverty in some cases. Inequality did not increase in any country because of taxes, subsidies and social spending. However, the extreme poverty headcount ratio was higher after taxes and transfers than before in Ethiopia, the United Republic of Tanzania, Ghana, Nicaragua, Uganda and Guatemala. This is due to the fact that people living in poverty were net payers into the fiscal system and were therefore impoverished by consumption taxes.[17] The overriding principle in the design of fiscal systems should be to ensure that poor people do not end up as net payers. High consumption taxes on basic goods can lead to this regressive result. Hence, to reduce the regressivity of taxes on goods and services, it may be necessary to exempt or set lower tax rates for basic goods that low-income households depend on, while setting higher rates for luxury goods that are principally consumed by wealthier households.

13. In developed countries, fiscal policies have reduced inequality and improved education and health outcomes through transfers. In countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), evidence from the period preceding the 2008 great recession shows that nearly three-quarters of the reduction in income inequality was due to cash transfers, with direct taxation accounting for the rest.[18] Similarly, in the European Union, government redistribution through the tax and benefit system reduced inequality by close to one third. Significant reductions in income inequality were largely due to spending on education and health as well as

[16] World Bank Group, *Toward Universal Financial Inclusion in China: Models, Challenges, and Global Lessons* (2018). Available from https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/29336/FinancialInclusionChinaP158554.pdf?sequence=9.

[17] Nora Lustig, "Fiscal policy, income redistribution, and poverty reduction in low and middle income countries", Center for Global Development Working Paper 448 (January 2017, updated July 2018). Available from www.cgdev.org/sites/default/files/fiscal-policy-income-redistribution-and-poverty-reduction-july-2018-revision.pdf.

[18] Isabelle Joumard, Mauru Pisu and Debbie Bloch, "Tackling income inequality: The role of taxes and transfers", *OECD Journal: Economic Studies*, No. 1 (2012), pp. 37-70. Available from www.oecd.org/eco/public-finance/TacklingincomeinequalityTheroleoftaxesandtransfers.pdf.

sickness, disability, family and child benefits during the period 1980 to 2014. However, because of behavioural responses and macroeconomic effects, the total effect of fiscal policy on inequality reduction was smaller than its direct effect.

14. The experience of developed countries also suggests that fiscal policy has had a stabilizing effect on income and consumption over the economic cycle, preventing poverty during economic downturns. Some of the consumption is absorbed by savings behaviour. Hence, transfers can ensure that people recover quickly from economic hardship. The more progressive the tax and benefits system, the higher its stabilization effect. In the United States, fiscal transfers such as the earned income tax credit are an important anti-poverty programme. Besides providing income support to the working poor, the programme also facilitates social inclusion by encouraging the participation of low-income adults in the labour market. Further, the programme reduces inequality because of its long-lasting effects on maternal and children's health and children's development such as improved school performance, lifetime health, and earnings in adulthood.[19]

15. The choice and size of fiscal policy instruments that countries deploy to affect income distribution are influenced by several factors that include administrative capacity, preferences within societies for redistribution, the role envisaged for the State and country-specific political economy considerations. However, a balance should be struck to ensure that both tax and expenditure policies do not discourage incentives for work or household and firm decisions to invest in education and in entrepreneurial activities. When workers' earnings rise but their after-tax income rises less, their incentive to work typically declines. This is often a result of increases in income and payroll taxes or declines in benefits.

16. Policymakers need to examine the impact of higher taxes on labour income and of social security contributions on incentives to work. Further, means-tested social transfers can provide disincentives for unemployed low-skilled workers, older workers and second earners to look for jobs. Targeted tax reforms such as introducing work-contingent tax credits and providing age-based concessions for young and older workers have the potential to stimulate labour force participation rates among these groups, contributing to reducing the number of potential welfare beneficiaries. Further, introducing financial incentives for employees, such as temporarily reducing employee social security contributions, can reduce the cost of hiring unemployed workers.[20]

B. Effects of public spending on inequality and social inclusion

17. Highly redistributive social transfers aimed at reducing inequalities of opportunity, such as education and health spending and social protection benefits, have significant long-term effects. Investments in basic infrastructure have similar effect. These transfers and investments also reduce poverty and foster social inclusion. Social spending on expanding access to education and health care over the last 15 years has reduced income inequality in emerging and developing countries by reducing the inequality of education and health and by expanding the ranks of the middle class. In Latin America, higher education spending has been the most

[19] Hilary Hoynes, "The earned income tax credit: a key policy to support families facing wage stagnation" (Berkeley, California, Institute for Research on Labor and Employment, January 2017). Available from http://irle.berkeley.edu/files/2017/IRLE-The-Earned-Income-Tax-Credit.pdf.

[20] OECD, *Taxation and Employment*. OECD Tax Policy Studies No. 21 (2011).

important driver behind the declining trend in income inequality.[21] In Asia, social spending on education and health has contributed to significant reductions in income inequality.[22]

18. On the other hand, changes in social policy measures, particularly reductions in government spending on social protection programmes, reduced benefit levels and more strict eligibility criteria, have contributed to a general deterioration of income distribution in both developed and developing countries.[23] Cuts in the amplitude of transfers such as unemployment and disability benefits and enforcement of stricter eligibility criteria were accompanied by sharp increases in income inequality in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Netherlands in the 1980s and mid-1990s. Although those cuts successfully contained government expenditure growth, the real disposable income of many beneficiaries fell sharply.[24]

19. Education is recognized as an equalizer and a means for inclusion. Spending on pre-school, primary and secondary education has been found to be pro-poor in developing countries.[25] Social spending on education also promotes gender equality and empowers women, contributing to improvements in labour force outcomes and maternal and child health. To achieve these goals, fiscal policies influence individual or household decision-making by subsidizing education at various levels and investment in skills. Hence, education is generally heavily subsidized in both developing and developed countries. In OECD countries, public expenditures on education average about six per cent of gross domestic product.[26] In developing countries, wealth inequality declines as secondary or higher education increases. In Africa, private returns to higher education are also higher than returns to primary education.[27] Further, the premium of lifetime earnings associated with higher education has increased around the world, reflecting higher demand for college-educated workers. In the United States, the median annual earnings of full-time workers with a four-year bachelor's degree are 79 per cent higher than the earnings of workers with only a high school diploma.[28] However, as access to higher education has become more stratified, with access to top universities depending increasingly on socioeconomic status, expansion of higher education could potentially worsen inequality. A related concern is that while education subsidies encourage more investment in education and skills, such policies can be regressive since they may disproportionately benefit students of better-to-do and better-informed families.

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[21] E. Tsounta and A.I. Osueke, *What is Behind Latin America's Declining Income Inequality?*, IMF Working Paper WP/14/124 (2014).

[22] Seok-Kyun Hur, *Government Spending and Inclusive Growth in Developing Asia*, Asian Development Bank Economics Working Paper Series No. 415 (November 2014). Available from https://ssrn.com/abstract=2558893.

[23] ILO, *World Social Protection Report 2017–2019: Universal Social Protection to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals* (Geneva, International Labour Office, 2017).

[24] Koen Caminada and. Kees Goudswaard, "International trends in income inequality and social policy", *International Tax and Public Finance*, vol. 8, No. 4, pp. 395–415.

[25] Nora Lustig, "The redistributive impact of government spending on education and health: evidence from thirteen developing countries in the Commitment to Equity Project", Commitment to Equity Project Working Paper No. 30 (March 2015). Available from www.commitmentoequity.org/publications_files/Comparative/CEQWPNo30%20RedisImpactGovntSpendEducHealth%20March%202015.pdf.

[26] Robert A. J. Dur and Coen N. Teulings, "Are education subsidies an efficient redistributive device?", in Jonas Agell, Michael Keen and Alfons J. Weichenrieder (eds.), *Labour Market Institutions and Public Regulation* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press, 2004), pp. 123–161.

[27] Abebe Shimeles, "Can higher education reduce inequality in developing countries?", *IZA World of Labor*, July 2016. Available from http://dx.doi.org/10.15185/izawol.273.

[28] Sandy Baum, *Higher Education Earnings Premium: Value, Variation, and Trends* (Washington, D.C., Urban Institute, February 2017).

20. In many countries, policymakers have sought to reduce income and non-income inequalities and challenges to social inclusion, such as high youth unemployment, by increasing the share of government spending on education. Global public education expenditure was 4.7 per cent of world GDP and 14.1 per cent of total public expenditure in 2015.[29] Public expenditures on education include the provision of free or subsidized schooling, teachers, classrooms and teaching materials. The reduction in education inequality across the world is primarily due to increased government spending on education as a share of national income in many developing countries. Hence, combating inequality and addressing social exclusion through education requires scaling up public spending to boost school enrolment and completion rates, particularly of young girls, children with disabilities, ethnic and religious minorities, children living in poverty and those in poor remote rural areas and urban slum settlements. Expenditure targeting such children does not amount to much. In 2013, it was estimated that government expenditure and donor funding levels would have to be increased by $26 billion per year to meet the goal of providing basic education to all children in 46 low and middle-income countries by 2015.[30] From 2015 to 2030, an estimated $340 billion would have to be spent per year (compared to the 2012 level of $149 million) to ensure that every child and adolescent in low- and lower middle-income countries has access to good quality education from the pre-primary to upper secondary level.[31]

21. Policymakers also seek to tackle the credit constraints that prevent low-income students from pursuing higher education by conditioning student loans, grants and tuition fees on parental income. Such policies have contributed to higher levels of educational attainment by students from low-income backgrounds. However, student loans that are intended to provide everyone with equal access to education are imposing a huge debt burden on middle- and low-income students in some countries, entrenching income and wealth inequality.

22. Reversing this trend requires more public support for and access to affordable higher education. Women also tend to be disproportionately affected by student debt since they take longer to pay it off, partly as a consequence of the gender pay gap. Some evidence also shows that, in advanced economies, the expansion of education is associated with a net increase in income inequality.[32] In this group of countries, the income inequality-increasing impact of rising levels of education offsets the relatively smaller impact of decreasing education inequality at the lower levels of education inequality. And in developing countries where child labour is prevalent, school attendance has an opportunity cost for households that depend on child labour for domestic chores, farming or other income-generating activities.[33] In the absence of compulsory schooling or laws banning child labour, increasing public expenditure on education can worsen inequality between children who take advantage of improved schooling opportunities and those who do not.

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[29] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), *Global Education Monitoring Report 2017/18: Accountability in Education — Meeting Our Commitments* (Paris, 2017). Available from http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0025/002593/259338e.pdf.

[30] UNESCO, "Education for all is affordable — by 2015 and beyond", Education for All Global Monitoring Report, Policy Paper 06, February 2013. Available from http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0021/002199/219998E.pdf.

[31] http://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/education-2030-incheon-framework-for-action-implementation-of-sdg4-2016-en_2.pdf.

[32] David Coady and Allan Dizioli, *Income Inequality and Education Revisited: Persistence, Endogeneity, and Heterogeneity*, IMF Working Paper WP/17/126 (2017).

[33] Martin Ravallion and Quentin Wodon, "Does child labour displace schooling? Evidence on behavioural responses to an enrollment subsidy", *The Economic Journal*, vol. 110, No. 462 (March 2000), pp. C158–C175.

23. A government's commitment to combating inequality and equalizing opportunities is also demonstrated by the share of total government spending devoted to expanding affordable and quality health care and services. Around 2010, government spending on health varied from 0.9 per cent of GDP in Indonesia, to 1.3 per cent in Ethiopia and 5.2 per cent in Brazil.[34] Income-related health inequalities are lower in countries characterized by a universal public health system or with high levels of public social spending.[35] In Europe, social spending has a positive impact on equalizing health status across countries.[36] In Kenya, deworming treatments in childhood have been shown to reduce school absences while also raising average wages in adulthood by as much as 21 to 29 per cent.[37] Increasing the share of government spending on health-care systems can directly improve child, adolescent and maternal health outcomes and enhance intergenerational economic mobility. Further, emerging and low-income countries can raise life expectancy at birth by 1.3 years on average if they eliminate inequalities in basic health coverage, while keeping spending levels unchanged.[38]

24. However, it is important to note that countries cannot address inequities in health status and in health systems or improve health by simply increasing government expenditure on health. For instance, health-care spending at the individual level can worsen income inequality and poverty, as people living in poverty spend a much greater proportion of their income on health care compared to richer people. At the macro level, health care spending can crowd out resources from other investment such as spending on education or environmental protection.

25. Besides public spending on education, health and social protection, fiscal measures that improve access to quality basic infrastructure services such as roads, electricity, safe water and sanitation, particularly in rural and remote areas, also reduce income inequality and foster social inclusion.[39] Such spending improves growth of incomes in these areas and therefore reduces spatial inequalities. Access to infrastructure removes physical obstacles to access to education and health-care services and even employment, helping to reduce inequality and social exclusion. Energy subsidies aimed at helping people living in poverty and low-income households are also used by many countries as fiscal tools to reduce inequality and exclusion. However, the experience of developing countries is that the top 20 per cent of households capture, on average, seven times as many of the benefits of energy subsidies as do the bottom 20 per cent, worsening inequality.[40]

26. In the Middle East and North Africa, many countries rely on consumption subsidies that include fuel, food and housing for reducing inequality. In 2011, countries in the region devoted 8.6 per cent of the region's total GDP, or 22 per cent

[34] Nora Lustig, note 25 above.

[35] Javier Alvarez-Galvez and others, "The impact of socio-economic status on self-rated health: Study of 29 countries using European social surveys (2002–2008)", *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, vol. 10 (March 2013), pp. 747–761.

[36] Javier Alvarez-Gálvez and Antonio M. Jaime-Castillo, "The impact of social expenditure on health inequalities in Europe", *Social Science and Medicine*, vol. 200 (March 2018), pp. 9–18.

[37] Sarah Baird and others, "Worms at work: long-run impacts of child health gains" (2011). Available from www.cgdev.org/sites/default/files/archive/doc/events/KLPS-Labor_2011-05-16-Circulate.pdf.

[38] IMF, "Tackling inequality", *Fiscal Monitor* (October 2017). Available from www.imf.org/en/Publications/FM/Issues/2017/10/05/fiscal-monitor-october-2017.

[39] Asian Development Bank, *Infrastructure for Supporting Inclusive Growth and Poverty Reduction in Asia* (2017). Available from www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/29823/infrastructure-supporting-inclusive-growth.pdf.

[40] David Coady, Valentina Flamini and Louis Sears, "The unequal benefits of fuel subsidies revisited: evidence for developing countries", in Benedict Clements and others (eds.), *Inequality and Fiscal Policy* (Washington, D.C., International Monetary Fund, 2015).

of government spending, to such subsidies.[41] In Malaysia, energy subsidies account for about 5 per cent of GDP. Although such subsidies are part of the social compact in many countries, they cause inefficiencies in the economy and are inefficient in supporting people living in poverty. However, removing them raises the price of goods and household expenditures on energy and transport, leading to increases in overall inequality, particularly in urban areas.

27. More importantly, in those countries with high public debt and large medium-term financing needs, the pressure on public budgets may require reductions in the provision of public services or welfare benefits, or a reversal of recent tax cuts. Such reductions have been shown to increase income inequality and poverty. Fiscal consolidations in 17 OECD countries over the period 1978–2009 led to an increase in income inequality and long-term unemployment and a decrease in wage income shares.[42]

IV. Inequality, social inclusion and wage policies

28. Evidence from advanced, emerging and low-income countries reveal that wages can account for as much as 70 per cent of total household income. Hence, the distribution of wages and employment opportunities in the labour market are key determinants of overall income inequality trends in many countries. Changes in income inequality between 2006 and 2010 were significantly affected by changes in wage inequality, controlling for the effect of other income sources in the household and for employment effects. Wage effects were more significant for middle-income workers.[43] The wage discrimination against women, youth, older workers, persons with disabilities, indigenous groups and migrant workers costs these groups lost wages, reduced pensions and social security benefits. Eliminating discrimination should be part of an overall strategy of reducing inequality, particularly addressing group-based inequality and the social exclusion of disadvantaged and vulnerable groups. Wage growth also offers a path out of poverty and dependence on public transfers.

29. Stagnation in wage growth is another cause for concern. Although the global economy has seen falling unemployment rates since the Great Recession, wage growth has been subdued. According to estimates by the International Labour Organization (ILO), the global unemployment rate has been stabilizing after three years of rising unemployment rates. The unemployment rate is expected to reach 5.5 per cent in 2018, from 5.6 per cent in 2017. However, the total number of unemployed is expected to remain stable in 2018, above 192 million persons. Further, 1.4 billion workers were in vulnerable employment in 2017.[44] In developed countries, the unemployment rate in 2018 is projected to fall below pre-crisis levels, to reach 5.5 per cent. Employment growth has also improved in emerging and developing countries compared to 2016. However, employment growth is expected to fall short of labour force growth. In terms of inclusion in the labour market, women, youth, persons with disabilities and older persons are more likely to be unemployed or to be in vulnerable forms of employment.

[41] Carlo Sdralevich and others, *Subsidy Reform in the Middle East and North Africa: Recent Progress and Challenges Ahead* (Washington, D.C., IMF, 2014).

[42] Laurence Ball and others, *The Distributional Effects of Fiscal Consolidation*, IMF Working Paper WP/13/151 (June 2013).

[43] ILO, *Global Wage Report 2014/15: Wages and Income Inequality* (Geneva, International Labour Office, 2015).

[44] ILO, *World Employment and Social Outlook: Trends 2018* (Geneva, International Labour Office, 2018).

30. Wage growth is the missing piece in the economic recovery that is under way in many countries. Workers' wages have not kept pace with productivity for decades and rising costs of living are also a drag on the purchasing power of workers. Wage growth around the world slowed in 2015 to 1.7 per cent, compared to 2.5 per cent in 2012, and has yet to catch up to the pre-crisis rates of about 3.0 per cent. If China is not included, growth in global wages dropped from 1.6 per cent in 2012 to 0.9 per cent in 2015. Wage growth among developed countries of the Group of Twenty (G20) rose to 1.7 per cent in 2015, from 0.2 per cent in 2012. This was the highest rate in a decade. In contrast, real wage growth declined to 2.5 per cent in 2015, from 6.6 per cent in 2012 among emerging and developing G20 countries.

31. In Europe, real wage growth recovered from a negative trend in the post-crisis years but has remained rather subdued since 2015. Excluding Eastern Europe, real wage growth declined from 1.6 per cent in 2015 to 1.3 per cent in 2016 and further declined to about zero in 2017. In the United States, real wage growth declined from 2.2 per cent in 2015 to 0.7 per cent in both 2016 and 2017.[45] For the period from October 2017 to October 2018, real average weekly earnings increased by 0.9 per cent.[46] Wage growth remained at 4.0 per cent in Asia and the Pacific. However, more recent data indicate that Asian workers are expected to lead global wage growth in 2018, with China, India and Viet Nam posting solid gains. Wage growth declined to 3.4 per cent in Central and Western Asia and stood at 2.1 per cent in the Arab States and at 2.0 per cent in Africa. Real wages fell in Latin America and the Caribbean and in Eastern Europe by 1.3 per cent and 5.2 per cent, respectively.[47] However, higher average wage growth may not automatically benefit all employees equally, dampening the effect of wage growth on inequality.

32. Indeed, wage distribution is biased toward top income earners in most countries. In Europe in 2010, the top 10 per cent of the highest paid workers took on average 25.5 per cent of the total wages paid to all employees, while the lowest-paid 50 per cent got 29.1 per cent of total wages paid. In Brazil the share of the top 10 per cent stood at 35.0 per cent in 2015 while that in India and South Africa stood at 42.7 per cent and 49.2 per cent, respectively. In most countries, wage inequality is even steeper for women. In Europe, the gender pay gap in the top one per cent of wage earners was about 45 per cent in 2015. In contrast, the overall hourly gender pay gap was about 20 per cent.[48]

33. To reduce wage inequalities, policymakers can choose from various policy options, including minimum wages, strengthening the institutions of collective bargaining, addressing gender pay gaps, for example by promoting equal pay for work of equal value, and addressing unequal wages between groups of workers. Minimum wages have a more positive effect on wages of workers at the bottom than the top tail of the wage distribution, implying an equality-enhancing role. Extremely low wages must be supplemented with transfers to reduce inequality and poverty.[49]

34. Combating inequality through wage policies requires labour market policies that focus on the quantity and quality of jobs and the inclusiveness of the labour market. Labour markets need to be made more inclusive by removing barriers that prevent the full participation of groups with lower employment rates, notably women, young people, older workers, persons with disabilities, migrants and indigenous groups.

[45] ILO, *Global Wage Report 2018/19: What Lies Behind the Gender Pay Gap* (Geneva, International Labour Office, 2018).

[46] United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Real earnings — October 2018", news release, 14 November 2018. Available from www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/realer.pdf.

[47] ILO, *Global Wage Report 2016/17: Wage Inequality in the Workplace* (Geneva, International Labour Office, 2017).

[48] Ibid.

[49] www.statista.com/chart/12407/wage-growth-around-the-world-in-2018/.

Second, the quality of jobs needs to be reinforced by promoting decent work, making jobs more secure and sufficiently remunerated, avoiding inequality of treatment between temporary and permanent employment and tackling informality (informal employment). Further, investments in education, particularly higher education and skills training, are critical in improving labour market outcomes and in narrowing the wage gap, although in high-income countries the gender pay gap is largest at the top of the skills and earnings distribution. In Brazil, the Gini coefficient of labour earnings fell from 0.50 to 0.41 between 1995 and 2012, primarily owing to a falling education premium. Reductions in the gender, race, informality and urban-rural wage gaps also contributed to the decline.[50]

35. Many countries have sought to counter wage inequalities in the labour market, more specifically in the lower half of the wage distribution, by setting a statutory minimum wage level. Evidence from across developed countries suggests that the erosion of minimum wages relative to the median wage is strongly associated with increases in overall inequality.[51] Evidence also shows that minimum wages, if set at an adequate level, can also have an impact on inclusion, notably participation in the labour market.

36. Despite the fact that empirical evidence shows that minimum wages, when correctly set, do not have an adverse effect on overall employment, there are debates over the effects of minimum wages on employment demand. Much of the debate centres on whether, and to what extent, raising the minimum wage increases the labour and production cost to employers, causing job losses and informality. A related issue is whether increasing the minimum wage raises the cost of low-wage workers relative to other inputs, such as automation and more productive higher-skilled workers, which may cause employers to replace low-wage workers with those alternative inputs.

37. The burgeoning literature on the impact of minimum wages on employment demand in emerging economies shows that, overall, minimum wages have only a minimal or no impact on employment. These findings are consistent with the evidence in more advanced countries, which also shows very small or no effects of rising minimum wages on employment. In 14 major emerging economies that include Brazil, China, India, Mexico, the Russian Federation and South Africa, minimum wages were found to have minimal or no impact on employment. However, the impact on youth, low-wage earners and low-skilled workers tends to be negative but small. Further, there is little evidence that higher minimum wages lead to more informal employment.[52] In Asia, the employment effects of minimum wages are also mixed. In Thailand, large positive effects on the wages of prime-age males were observed, but only small effects on unemployment rates for female, older persons and less educated workers.[53] In sub-Saharan Africa, the proportion of workers covered by minimum wages is relatively small compared to other regions, reflecting the large share of workers in subsistence agriculture and in urban informal employment.[54] Nonetheless,

[50] Francisco H. G. Ferreira, Sergio P. Firpo and Julián Messina, "Ageing poorly?: Accounting for the decline in earnings inequality in Brazil, 1995-2012", World Bank Policy Research Working Paper 8018, March 2017.

[51] Florence Jaumotte and Carolina Osorio, "Inequality and labor market institutions", IMF Staff Discussion Note SDN/1514, July 2015.

[52] Stijn Broecke, Alessia Forti and Marieke Vandeweyer, "The effect of minimum wages on employment in emerging economies: a survey and meta-analysis", *Oxford Development Studies*, vol. 45, No. 3 (2016), pp. 366–391.

[53] Ximena Del Carpio, Julián Messina and Anna Sanz-de-Galdeano, "Minimum wage: does it improve welfare in Thailand?", Discussion Paper No. 7911 (Bonn, Germany, Institute for the Study of Labor, 2014).

[54] Haroon Bhorat, Ravi Kanbur and Benjamin Stanwix, "Minimum wages in sub-Saharan Africa: a primer", *World Bank Research Observer*, vol. 32, No. 1 (February 2017), pp. 21–74.

the employment effects of introducing or increasing minimum wages are consistent with global results. Although some evidence points to small negative employment effects, overall, most findings show that an increase in the minimum wage does not necessarily result in a decrease in employment.

38. Similarly, the effects of minimum wage rates on low-skilled, female low-skilled and youth employment were found to be minimal in 19 OECD countries from 1997 to 2013.[55] In the United States, recent evidence also suggests modest or no minimum wage effects on the employability of restaurant workers and young workers.[56] More importantly, a higher minimum wage is associated with increases in family income for many low-wage workers. However, some past studies found that an increase of the minimum wage had negative employment effects on minimum wage earners, notably for young people.[57]

39. Country experiences show that for minimum wages to be effective, it is important that the policies be tailored to the specific needs of each country. Given the specific circumstances and policy objectives of each country, it is advised to keep minimum wages "as complex as necessary but as simple as possible" and to avoid wage differentiation between different groups of workers which is not based on objective valid reasons, such as educational objectives, work experience or skills. Some countries have a single minimum wage rate, possibly with regional variations, while others have more complex systems, which may vary by sector and occupation. Both approaches have their merits, with systems that are more complex than necessary possibly losing some of their effectiveness. Exclusions from the law should be kept to a minimum, paying attention not to exclude particularly vulnerable workers such as domestic and agricultural workers. There should be a balanced and evidence-based approach to setting the minimum wage level, in full consultation with social partners and with the participation of experts when required. Moreover, minimum wage systems should leave space for the determination of wages through collective bargaining. The wage level (or levels, in case several apply) should be adjusted from time to time taking into account the cost of living, the needs of workers and their families and the needs of the economy, including, but not limited to, labour productivity and employment trends. It is important to monitor the effects of minimum wages on the wages and incomes of workers and their families; on employment, the sustainability of enterprises and informality; and on government finances (the public sector wage bill). Measures to ensure their effective application should also be put in place. These include labour inspections, adequate sanctions, information campaigns and capacity-building activities for employers and workers. If the "aspirational" minimum wage exceeds the economy's immediate capacity, a medium-term strategy can be adopted.[58]

40. Ending gender inequality and eliminating the gender pay gap is essential to reducing inequality. To address gender inequality and close the gender pay gap, countries should invest in girls and women and promote policies that ensure more and better jobs for women and equal pay at work. Increasing access to and control over productive assets, financial services and basic infrastructure is also critical. Countries should also develop comprehensive policy frameworks across legal, economic, social and labour sectors that eliminate gender-based discrimination and ensure wage equality, transparent pay scales and gender-neutral job evaluation systems. Other

[55] Simon Sturn, "Do minimum wages lead to job losses? Evidence from OECD countries on low-skilled and youth employment", *ILR Review*, vol. 71, No. 3 (May 2018), pp. 647–675.

[56] Sylvia Allegretto and others, "Credible research designs for minimum wage studies: A response to Neumark, Salas and Wascher", *ILR Review*, vol. 70, No. 3 (May 2017), pp. 559–592.

[57] David Neumark, J.M. Ian Salas and William Wascher, "More on recent evidence on the effects of minimum wages in the United States", *IZA Journal of Labor Policy*, vol. 3 (2014).

[58] ILO Minimum Wage Policy Guide (see www.ilo.org/global/topics/wages/minimum-wages/lang--en/index.htm).

important measures include establishing a floor to the wage structure and expanding the current rights for equal pay for work of equal value. In addition, there is a need to strengthen social policy and support, including leave provisions, childcare support, flexible working arrangements that support work-life balance, unpaid care work and social support for children.

V. Inequality, social inclusion and social protection policies

A. Social protection for social inclusion and reduction of inequality[59]

41. Social protection has emerged as one of the key policy instruments to reduce inequality and poverty simultaneously, while also promoting inclusive growth. Social protection contributes to reducing inequalities through three main channels. First, social protection reduces poverty and income inequality through the provision of cash or in-kind transfers and facilitating access to health care and other services. Second, it addresses the exclusion of vulnerable groups and offers a path out of poverty by reducing unequal opportunities and guaranteeing access to basic services such as education, health and nutrition and providing employment opportunities through government-sponsored employment guarantee schemes to low-skilled poor rural workers. Third, it provides protection against risks and in case of shocks, helps to smooth household incomes and consumption and counteracts irreversible asset depletion associated with external shocks.

42. Although countries are increasingly recognizing the importance of social protection in promoting inclusive development, significant coverage gaps remain. Only 45.2 per cent of the global population is covered by at least one social protection benefit. This means that 54.8 per cent, or four billion people, have no social protection at all. The proportion of the population covered by at least one benefit varies from 17.8 per cent in Africa to 38.9 per cent in Asia and the Pacific, 67.6 per cent in the Americas and 84.1 per cent in Europe and Central Asia. Further, only 29 per cent of the global population is covered by comprehensive social security systems that include the full range of benefits. Almost 1.3 billion children globally are not covered by social protection and only 21.8 per cent of unemployed workers receive unemployment benefits.[60]

43. To enhance the role of social protection in reducing inequalities, efforts should be made to close coverage gaps, enhance the adequacy of benefits, extend social protection to all workers in need, including disadvantaged or vulnerable groups, and streamline existing fragmented social protection programmes into nationally appropriate social protection systems, including floors. These include contributory social protection, social services and social assistance.

44. Social protection strategies should provide effective protection for all and extend protection to those who are currently not covered, including the "missing middle", referring to those who are neither covered by social transfers targeted at the poorest, nor social insurance. Many workers in the informal economy, the working poor and workers engaged in vulnerable employment lack access to adequate social protection, although they are exposed to greater risks of job losses, illness, injury or disability. Globally, about 2 billion people work in the informal economy, representing 61 per cent of global employment and 50 per cent when excluding

[59] A comprehensive examination of the role of social protection in reducing inequality and promoting inclusion can be found in *Promoting Inclusion through Social Protection: Report on the World Social Situation 2018* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.17.IV.2).

[60] ILO, *World Social Protection Report 2017–2019*, note 23 above.

agriculture.[61] In sub-Saharan Africa and Southern Asia, 9 in 10 workers are in informal employment, while in South-Eastern Asia and the Pacific it is more than 7 in 10 workers. Hence, countries should extend social protection to the workers in the informal economy. In Africa, the African Union adopted the "Social protection for informal and rural economy workers" strategy to promote the provision of a minimum social protection package to informal and rural workers and their families.

45. Cash transfers for children have expanded in low- and middle-income countries over the past decades, although coverage and benefit levels remain insufficient in many countries. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and ILO are examining whether universal child grants could be an important practical policy instrument to ensure that all children realize their potential, as well as to reduce inequality and poverty. Such investments in children have multiple long-term benefits. In addition, the universality of such grants contributes to reducing administrative costs and technical complexities associated with identifying target populations, while avoiding exclusion errors as well as stigmatization associated with being poor.

B. Social protection systems, including social protection floors

46. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (General Assembly resolution 70/1) calls for universal social protection that includes guaranteeing a social protection floor for all as part of social protection systems. Currently, 187 countries have committed themselves to establishing such floors to provide a nationally defined set of basic social security guarantees, and build progressively comprehensive social protection systems, by adopting the ILO Social Protection Floors Recommendation (No. 202) in 2012.[62] The floors are to ensure at a minimum that, over the life cycle, all in need have access to essential health care, including maternity care, without risk of hardship and an increased risk of poverty, and basic income security throughout the life course, including in case of maternity, sickness, disability, employment injury and old age. The floors are affordable in most low-income countries and many developing countries have achieved universal coverage for at least one branch. The cost of a set of cash benefits for 57 low-income and lower middle-income countries range from 0.3 of gross domestic product (GDP) for Mongolia to 9.8 per cent of GDP for Sierra Leone — with an average cost of 4.2 per cent of GDP. These costs include universal benefits for 364 million children, 81 million pregnant women, 103 million persons with severe disabilities and 153 million older persons.[63] Lack of coverage and adequacy are linked to insufficient public investments in social protection. Only 1.1 per cent of global GDP is allocated to social protection for children, compared to an allocation of 6.9 per cent for older persons. Further, public investments are shrinking as a negative impact of austerity or fiscal consolidation cuts.

47. One of the key challenges to expanding social protection, particularly in low- and middle-income countries, is adequate financing. To meet the basic minimum of a social protection floor, low-income and middle-income countries without such a floor must increase public spending to an average of 5 per cent and 2 per cent of their GDP,

[61] ILO, *Women and Men in the Informal Economy: A Statistical Picture*, 3rd edition (Geneva, International Labour Office, 2018). Available from http://www.ilo.org/global/publications/books/WCMS_626831/lang--en/index.htm.

[62] ILO, *World Social Protection Report 2017–2019*, note 23 above, and "Promoting social protection floors for all: time for action" (brochure, available from http://ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---africa/documents/publication/wcms_348663.pdf).

[63] Isabel Ortiz and others, *Universal Social Protection Floors: Costing Estimates and Affordability in 57 Lower Income Countries*, Extension of Social Security Working Paper No. 58 (Geneva, International Labour Office, 2017).

respectively.[64] To fund social protection systems, governments need to broaden the tax base and introduce or strengthen progressive taxation. This entails strengthening national tax systems, reducing the informal economy and tackling tax avoidance. To ensure fiscal sustainability, countries can reallocate public expenditures from less appropriate uses such as fuel subsidies to social protection. They can also expand coverage of contributory schemes, better manage debt and adopt a more accommodative macroeconomic framework.[65] Governments may consider increasing fiscal resources from natural resources or exploring innovative sources of development finance.

C. Impacts of greater investment in social protection

48. Social protection benefits play an important role in reducing poverty and inequality. The combined effects of taxes and transfers can reduce income inequality significantly. In some OECD countries, the combined effects of taxes and transfers reduce income inequality by more than 40 per cent. [66,67] The effects of cash transfers to vulnerable households on the reduction of poverty and inequality have also been well documented. In many Latin America countries, evidence indicates that cash transfers targeted to households living in poverty have had a noticeable redistributive effect, contributing to a decline in inequality. Cash transfer programmes in Mexico and Brazil reduced income inequality by 21 per cent between the mid-1990s and mid-2000s and were, after labour income, the second most powerful driving force in the reduction of inequality.[68] Cash transfers also lead to significant increases in school enrolment and expend es on and use of agricultural inputs and investment in assets and livestock accumulation, and an overall positive effect on employment.

49. However, cash transfers alone are insufficient to help people permanently escape poverty, as the positive effects of social protection on poverty can easily be undone by regressive tax systems. To have a meaningful effect, the transfers need to be regular, predictable and preferably substantial, covering at least 25 to 30 per cent of average consumption needs, and they should be coupled with measures that foster access to the labour market and productivity. Social cash transfer programmes need to be designed as part of a national social protection system and within a wider socioeconomic policy framework that includes poverty reduction strategies.

VI. Recommendations

50. Rising inequality is neither desirable nor inevitable. With the right set of policies and institutions, inequality in all its forms can be curbed. Hence, to reduce inequality and address challenges to social inclusion, the Commission may wish to consider the following recommendations:

(a) **Countries should enhance the role of fiscal policies in addressing inequalities of opportunities and outcomes and promote social inclusion by expanding and sustaining fiscal space. This entails raising revenues rather than cutting productive social expenditures, improving tax fairness, reducing the**

[64] www.adb.org/news/events/strategies-for-financing-social-protection-to-achieve-the-sdgs.

[65] Isabel Ortiz, Matthew Cummins and Kalaivani Karunanethy, *Fiscal Space for Social Protection and the SDGs: Options to Expand Social Investments in 187 Countries*, Extension of Social Security Working Paper No. 48 (Geneva, International Labour Office, 2017).

[66] OECD, *Society at a Glance 2016: OECD Social Indicators* (Paris, 2016).

[67] OECD, *In It Together: Why Less Inequality Benefits All* (Paris, 2015). Available from www.oecd.org/els/soc/OECD2015-In-It-Together-Chapter1-Overview-Inequality.pdf.

[68] Sergei Soares and others, "Conditional cash transfers in Brazil, Chile and Mexico: impacts upon inequality", *Estudios Económicos* (special issue, 2009), pp. 207–224. Available from https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/4367/a7279d6f7e82281f9705e0ad9cb54517ea58.pdf.

informal economy, increasing tax progressivity, rationalizing exemptions and implementing administrative reforms to stem tax evasion and illicit financial flows. Countries should also diversify revenue sources by reducing volatility and enhancing sustained growth;

(b) To simultaneously address inequality and poverty, governments should carefully choose options for expanding fiscal space and, in particular, carefully assess the possible adverse impacts of austerity-based fiscal consolidations on inequality, poverty and social inclusion. Fiscal policy needs to be carefully designed to balance equity, stabilization and efficiency concerns, considering potentially harmful indirect effects. In this context, governments should design tax and transfers systems to ensure that people living in poverty, the working poor and the near poor do not end up as net payers. The incomes of these groups after taxes and transfers should not be lower than their market incomes before fiscal interventions;

(c) Labour market policies that strengthen institutions that provide adequate labour protection to all workers, especially the most disadvantaged, and minimum wages, should be part of policies to boost income growth for the vast majority of workers. To address informality, developing countries should also implement business entry reforms, reduce compliance costs and set incentives to support small businesses and ensure their transition to the formal economy;

(d) To ensure that women's employment and earnings contribute to curbing inequality, countries should implement policies that support female labour participation, promote equal pay for work of equal value and embed gender equality in all policymaking;

(e) Policymakers must address the disadvantages that women, youth, older workers, persons with disabilities, migrant workers and temporary and part-time workers face in employment. Possible initiatives include setting minimum wages; broadening minimum wage coverage so as to benefit all groups; improving access to quality secondary and tertiary education to build human capital and upgrade skills over the longer term; helping young people to enter the labour force and the unemployed to re-enter the labour market by providing employment services, and removing barriers to hiring and retaining older workers. Temporary and part-time workers should not be subject to wage penalties based on occupational status and should also receive prorated, paid annual family and sick leave to secure parity with full-time workers;

(f) Public spending that ensures universal health coverage and access to quality health care and inclusive and equitable access to quality education at all levels, including early childhood education, is crucial for achieving equity of opportunities for all and addressing disparities in human capital. Countries should increase investment to expand public provision of such basic services and increase public expenditure on infrastructure, particularly in rural areas;

(g) Countries should build national social protection systems, including floors that cover all people throughout the life cycle, guarantee access to essential goods and services and reduce unequal opportunities for people living in poverty and socially excluded groups. The design of social protection systems should also ensure that benefits do not create work disincentives and that they promote gender equality. Countries should include the universal child grant as one component of social protection floors, since investments in children have multiple long-term benefits;

(h) Countries should better coordinate social protection policies and measures with poverty reduction programmes and universal social policies to avoid excluding people in informal or precarious jobs.

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Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly: review of relevant United Nations plans and programmes of action pertaining to the situation of social groups

Accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by, for and with persons with disabilities

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report reviews (a) the international normative framework relating to the mainstreaming of disability in development and (b) progress made by Member States, the United Nations system and civil society in promoting the rights and well-being of persons with disabilities and mainstreaming disability in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It concludes with policy recommendations.

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I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Economic and Social Council resolution 2017/12, in which the Council requested the Secretary-General to report on the implementation of that resolution during the fifty-seventh session of the Commission for Social Development.

2. The report reviews (a) the international normative framework relating to the mainstreaming of disability in development and (b) progress made by Member States, the United Nations system and civil society in promoting the rights and well-being of persons with disabilities and mainstreaming disability in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development[1] and other global development frameworks. The report also provides an overview of approaches to accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda by, for and with persons with disabilities and sets out action-oriented recommendations in this regard.

II. Disability in the current global development landscape

3. Building upon decades of work by the United Nations, the current international normative framework on disability-inclusive development consists of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities,[2] the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and other major international development instruments.[3] The framework recognizes disability as a cross-cutting issue and defines the pathway for ensuring the equality and inclusion of persons with disabilities in society and development.

4. The unanimous adoption of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities by the General Assembly represents a milestone in the mainstreaming of disability as an integral part of sustainable development.[4] Since then, the Assembly has repeatedly underscored that the inclusion of the rights, needs and well-being of persons with disabilities is necessary to achieve inclusive and sustainable development for all.[5]

5. The nearly universal ratification of the Convention,[6] together with the adoption and implementation of the ambitious 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in which countries pledged that no one would be left behind, demonstrate the concrete commitments of the international community to further mainstreaming disability as both a human rights and a development imperative.

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[1] Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (General Assembly resolution 70/1).

[2] General Assembly resolution 61/106, annex I.

[3] These documents include the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway (General Assembly resolution 69/15, annex), the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development (General Assembly resolution 69/313, annex), the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 (General Assembly resolution 69/283, annex II), the New Urban Agenda (General Assembly resolution 71/256, annex), the Agenda for Humanity (A/70/709, annex) and other key instruments concerning disability, such as the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons (A/37/351/Add.1 and A/37/351/Add.1/Corr.1, annex, sect. VIII, recommendation 1 (IV)), the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (General Assembly resolution 48/96, annex) and the outcome document of the high-level meeting on the realization of the Millennium Development Goals and other internationally agreed development goals for persons with disabilities: the way forward, a disability-inclusive development agenda towards 2015 and beyond (General Assembly resolution 68/3).

[4] General Assembly resolution 61/106, annex I, preamble, para. (g).

[5] In General Assembly resolution 68/3 and other resolutions.

[6] As at 30 August 2018, there were 177 States parties to the Convention.

6. Recognizing the persistent marginalization too often experienced by persons with disabilities, the outcome document of the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on disability and development and the 2030 Agenda adopt a holistic approach to redressing inequalities faced by persons with disabilities. They recognize disability as a cross-cutting development issue[7] and call for targeted actions in specific areas such as education, employment, urban development and human settlement, inequalities, and disability data and statistics for Sustainable Development Goal monitoring and evaluation. Such actions respond to the call in the 2030 Agenda to reach "the furthest behind first" and further support the empowerment of persons with disabilities as agents of change to achieve the Goals for all.

7. In this context, persons with disabilities should be assured of equal opportunities in society, facilitated by enabling environments and living conditions, and supported for their empowerment and participation in decision-making that affects their lives. It should be noted that the empowerment of individuals with disabilities and their communities also requires capacity-building to respond to changing circumstances in the economic, social, political and cultural spheres (see E/HLS/2018/1, para. 11).

III. Progress made in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for persons with disabilities

8. The present report is based on information provided by Member States,[8] the United Nations system[9] and civil society organizations[10] on the implementation of Economic and Social Council resolution 2017/12. It also takes into account other available sources, including the voluntary national reviews for the 2017 and 2018 high-level political forum on sustainable development, in particular information concerning (a) progress in mainstreaming disability in development policies and programmes and in the mobilization of resources; (b) progress in promoting accessibility;[11] (c) concrete actions taken to eliminate discrimination and to equalize opportunities for the participation of persons with disabilities; and (d) steps taken to increase and improve disability data and to address the gap in data collection and evidence-based analysis. The following sections provide information on the progress made and challenges remaining in these areas.

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[7] The 2030 Agenda promotes the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of disability or other status (target 10.2). It seeks to ensure equal access to justice (target 16.3), universal health coverage and access to quality health care (para. 26 of the Agenda), universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all (target 6.1), infrastructure development with equitable access for all (target 9.1) and safe, accessible transportation and public spaces for all while giving a special attention to the needs of those in vulnerable situations, including persons with disabilities and others (targets 11.2 and 11.7).

[8] Submissions received from Argentina, Belarus, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Colombia, Denmark, El Salvador, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, India, Indonesia, Jordan, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Mauritania, Panama, Peru, the Philippines, Poland, Portugal, the Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Ukraine.

[9] Submissions received from the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, the International Labour Organization, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and the World Health Organization.

[10] Submissions received from the European Disability Forum, the Global Initiative for Inclusive Information and Communication Technologies, Sightsavers and the World Blind Union.

[11] International Organization for Standardization (ISO) standard 9241-171:2008 defines "accessibility" as the "usability of a product, service, environment or facility by people with the widest range of capabilities". The present report follows that approach when it refers to the term in a narrow sense, taking into account that there are other instances in which the term may be used to mean "access".

A. Member States

9. Persons with disabilities continue to face a disproportionately high risk, compared with the general population, of experiencing poverty and social exclusion. Member States have been taking action to overcome this, including through the development or amendment of national legislation, policies, development strategies and plans of action for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and in line with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. In carrying out this work, Member States have focused on a range of issues and sectors, including quality education; skills training, employment and decent work; access to health care and rehabilitation services; poverty eradication and social protection; housing and urban development; and cross-cutting areas that pertain to the participation of persons with disabilities, including accessibility, participation and disability data and statistics (see A/73/211/Rev.1).

1. Quality education

10. Universal access to all levels of education, which is essential to the achievement of sustainable development for all, is also a critical measure to empower persons with disabilities to become full participants and agents of change in society. Member States reported the adoption of a range of policies to promote inclusive education for children with disabilities. Portugal established principles and norms that guarantee inclusion, identified measures to support learning, developed specific curricular areas and mobilized resources to meet the need of every child and youth with disabilities. Greece implemented an institutional framework to ensure equal opportunities for all to learn in mainstream educational structures by focusing on attendance in classes with parallel programmes of individualized support for students with disabilities. Lithuania reported on its efforts to transform special education schools into resource centres that provide counselling services and on its provision of educational assistance and assistive devices to students with disabilities. Maldives introduced free education, including the provision of support specifically to children with disabilities to increase their enrolment.

11. Limited access to educational opportunities, combined with a lack of accessible physical educational environments, facilities, services, learning materials and necessary dedicated support for both learners and teachers, continues to present challenges to persons with disabilities, especially those living in remote and rural areas, in terms of receiving quality education. A number of Member States reported on their policies concerning accessible environments for schools and universities. Cyprus provided free transportation, as well as specialized teachers, care assistants and assistive technologies to persons with disabilities. Saudi Arabia had created national centres that provide school transportation for students with mobility disabilities. Panama made progress in promoting the inclusion of students with disabilities, with an increased number of trained teachers focusing on the needs in rural and indigenous areas.

12. Educational support for youth and adults with disabilities helps open the gateway for them to promote positive change in society and development. The Philippines mandated the provision of disability support funding in its Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Act. India introduced several programmes to provide scholarships at various levels to persons with disabilities, including for the pursuit of professional and technical education in institutions in India and abroad. India also launched an online library of accessible books, in line with the Marrakesh

Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons Who Are Blind, Visually Impaired or Otherwise Print Disabled.[12]

2. Skills training, employment and decent work

13. Persons with disabilities experience persistently low rates of employment, and their potential contribution in the labour market therefore remains largely untapped. Member States have taken a number of specific actions to address this. These include increasing investments in human resources and building the capacity of persons with disabilities by ensuring universal access to quality education and by offering technical vocational education and training. Lithuania and Saudi Arabia established vocational rehabilitation programmes. Australia introduced a labour fund, which provides small- and medium-sized companies resources for the training of individuals, including persons with disabilities. Canada implemented two major mechanisms, including the Opportunities Fund for Persons with Disabilities and the Workforce Development Agreements. The Opportunity Fund provides financial support to national and local authorities and third-party organizations to train Canadians with disabilities to enable them to gain work experience and obtain and retain employment or self-employment. The Workforce Development Agreements provide funds to local authorities for the development and delivery of capacity development services for citizens focused on job-oriented skills upgrading and work experience.

14. The effective promotion of employment and decent work for persons with disabilities requires both non-discrimination legislation and specific policy measures, such as affirmative action. Member States, including Cambodia, Canada, India, Indonesia, Lithuania, Malta and the Philippines, reported on progress made in taking such approaches. Colombia carried out outreach activities to promote awareness of the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the labour market. It provided advice and labour intermediation services to employers and issued a series of decrees to promote the employment of persons with disabilities, establishing a quota system in the public sector, coordinating the efforts of the private sector aimed at the development of employment-oriented skills for persons with disabilities and their families and carers, and introducing an incentive mechanism for companies to hire persons with disabilities.[13]

15. Enabling conditions and incentive mechanisms to encourage the participation of persons with disabilities in the labour market are also of critical importance. Several Member States introduced innovative policies to encourage the employment of persons with disabilities. Georgia launched a national programme on employment support services, in which job coaches and wage subsidies were provided to support job seekers with disabilities, as well as to incentivize employers with vacancies. Greece initiated a new job guarantee programme in the private sector to create new jobs and provide incentives to enterprises to hire unemployed persons, including those with disabilities, by subsidizing their wage and non-wage costs. States also put in place initiatives to create enabling conditions in the workplace and beyond for persons with disabilities. Canada introduced the draft Accessible Canada Act to ensure a barrier-free employment environment. Belgium developed a mechanism to facilitate the inclusion of persons with disabilities, including through the provision of vocational training, the promotion of employment and the accessible adaptation of workplaces, which benefited over 7,700 persons with disabilities in 2016.

[12] Available at www.wipo.int/meetings/en/doc_details.jsp?doc_id=245323.

[13] Colombia, Decree 392 of 26 February 2018.

3. Access to health care and rehabilitation services

16. Persons with disabilities often experience obstacles and challenges in accessing health-care services owing to attitudinal, physical and financial barriers, including discrimination and stigmatization; lack of availability, accessibility and affordability of a full range of quality health-care services; and limitations on support provided by health insurance. Several Member States reported on measures taken to facilitate and support access by persons with disabilities to health care. Belgium and Malta, for example, implemented national policies on universal health-care coverage for persons with disabilities.

17. Accessible health care and rehabilitation services for persons with disabilities, as well as training programmes for health personnel on the rights of persons with disabilities, were also highlighted as necessary steps for persons with disabilities to access health-care services on an equal basis with others. India, Lithuania and Saudi Arabia reported on their efforts to provide barrier-free access in all public and private hospitals and other health-care institutions and centres.

18. Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Ecuador, India, Indonesia and the United Arab Emirates also put in place national programmes dedicated to the early identification of the occurrence of disability among children and to early rehabilitation and intervention.

4. Poverty eradication and social protection

19. Persons with disabilities and the members of their households are disproportionately more likely than members of the general population to live in poverty. In many countries, development policies and programmes are focused on poverty eradication for persons with disabilities.

20. Many States provide public services and economic assistance, including allowances, pensions, cash transfers and other social security programmes, to guarantee the basic needs of persons with disabilities. Some States have introduced various programmes to address the acute needs of persons with disabilities living in poverty. Peru adopted a guideline for mainstreaming the disability approach in social programmes, which includes the percentage of persons with disabilities in poverty as an indicator for assessing progress. Ukraine took legislative steps to simplify the procedure for local authorities to provide social protection to persons with disabilities in the form of tax benefits. India reserved a 5 per cent quota for persons with disabilities in all its poverty alleviation programmes and other developmental schemes, with specific attention given to women with disabilities.

21. In 2018, Lithuania increased its social assistance pension for persons with disabilities from €112 to €150. It decided to link this social assistance pension base to minimum consumption needs and, from 2019 on, to recalculate the amount annually to ensure the adequacy of the financial support provided. Ecuador introduced *Las Joaquinas*, a programme to create the conditions necessary for caregivers of persons with severe disabilities, through the provision of seed capital for productive undertakings to support the well-being of both persons with severe disabilities and their caregivers. To ensure that persons with disabilities affected by poverty can enjoy the tax measures in place, Canada also introduced the Community Volunteer Income Tax Program to host free tax preparation clinics.

22. In Saudi Arabia, a unified subsidy system was in place to strengthen participation by persons with disabilities and monitoring mechanisms for the follow-up and evaluation of the provision of social protection.

5. Economic empowerment, including through financial inclusion

23. Member States also worked to advance the financial inclusion and economic empowerment of persons with disabilities, including by ensuring their equal access to personal finance and other forms of financial services. The Philippines reported that national and local governments were required by the General Appropriation Act and the internal revenue allotment to allocate resources for their work relating to persons with disabilities and senior citizens. That was in addition to the conditional cash transfer programme targeting families with disabilities to support them in accessing health and educational services. Indonesia worked with several major banks to guarantee the right of persons with disabilities to open their own bank accounts and encouraged the provision of accessible automatic teller machines equipped with Braille keypads. India reserved a 5 per cent allotment of agricultural land and housing for persons with disabilities in all relevant development programmes and schemes, with priority given to women with disabilities.

24. States also took measures to facilitate access to financing, including microcredit, to enable and empower persons with disabilities to pursue their own businesses and entrepreneurship for a decent and sustainable livelihood. For example, Canada implemented the Opportunities Fund for Persons with Disabilities, which supported national and regional projects that helped persons with disabilities prepare for, obtain and maintain employment or self-employment. Costa Rica created projects to encourage entrepreneurship among persons with disabilities. The State of Palestine launched a microloan programme to support persons with disabilities in starting their own ventures and joining the productive sectors.

6. Housing and urban development

25. Accessible, adequate and affordable housing is a key concern in relation to the livelihood of persons with disabilities. A number of States introduced initiatives to improve accessibility and increase the provision of housing for persons with disabilities, especially those living in poverty. Canada included persons with disabilities among those most in need in its national housing strategy and provided funding support, through the Enabling Accessibility Fund, of Can$ 15 million annually, for new and renewed housing projects to meet accessibility standards. Lithuania invested in promoting accessibility improvements in housing environments for families with children with severe disabilities. Jamaica introduced lower mortgage rates, specifically targeting persons with disabilities, under its home grants programme. In July 2016, the Russian Federation began enforcing a policy that requires residential premises occupied by persons with disabilities to be equipped with special devices to ensure accessibility and that also provides a preferential rate, reflecting a reduction of 50 per cent or more, for utilities for residents with disabilities and families with children with disabilities.

26. The Philippines required that 10 per cent of all government housing be made accessible to meet the needs of persons with disabilities. Cameroon issued a decree to apply its Law 2010/002 on the protection and promotion of persons with disabilities, by which persons with disabilities are granted priority in using lodging facilities and renting public lodging at a reduced rate.

27. To ensure that persons with disabilities might access and enjoy the benefits of public transportation on an equal basis with others, Jordan launched initiatives to ensure the accessibility of rapid bus transit in the Greater Amman Municipality. Bhutan, Ireland, Slovakia and Viet Nam also improved their public transport services so that they were responsive to the needs of persons with disabilities.

7. Accessibility

28. Accessibility is well recognized in key international frameworks, including the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the 2030 Agenda, as a precondition to ensure that persons with disabilities can fully participate in society and development. The lack of accessible environments, facilities, products and services remained a challenge in many countries, developed and developing alike. A growing number of Member States were taking proactive and comprehensive approaches to address that lack and to promote accessibility.

29. In many countries, accessibility was promoted through constitutional laws and/or sectoral legislation. For instance, Colombia and Mauritania issued decrees aimed at the elimination of architectural barriers.[14] Argentina recently adopted legislation to promote accessible audiovisual programmes, including through closed captioning, sign language and user-friendly design in web pages.[15] Jordan introduced a national plan for removing barriers in existing buildings, facilities, places of worship and tourist sites that extend services to the public, with the full involvement of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations in the process.[16]

30. Member States also promoted accessibility through the development and implementation of specific national strategies, plans of action and technical standards, in line with the principles of universal design. Peru adopted a national accessibility plan for the period 2018–2023 to incorporate and promote accessibility in its national development strategy, including in the sphere of information and communication. Poland was developing a national accessibility standard, following the principles of universal design and based on lessons learned from its Accessibility Plus Programme, which required the application of accessibility principles to all public works undertaken by central and local governments, agencies and funds, schools and companies that provide services to the public.

31. Member States also undertook initiatives and innovations to advance accessibility as an integral step for achieving inclusive sustainable urban and rural development. Germany considered accessibility a central priority in its National Action Plan 2.0 for the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, with a focus on the promotion of inclusive social spaces in urban and rural development. Its City of the Future pilot programme is currently being implemented by 52 cities across the country, and is aimed at increasing accessible passenger transportation in local and long-distance traffic. Canada recently appointed its first Deputy Minister of Public Service Accessibility. In addition to allocating Can$ 15 million annually to a programme of the Enabling Accessibility Fund to support the capital cost of accessible construction and renovations, Canada launched an accessible technology programme to co-fund innovative public-private partnership projects to develop new assistive and adaptive digital technologies and devices. El Salvador and Malta undertook initiatives to promote socially inclusive and accessible tourism, as well as the development of small and medium-sized tourist businesses, as part of efforts towards the larger goal of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals for all.

8. Participation in policymaking, implementation and monitoring and evaluation

32. The full and effective participation of persons with disabilities in all stages of relevant policy processes is essential for building an inclusive, equitable society for all. Strengthening legal and policy frameworks focusing on ensuring non-discrimination continued to be a priority for many Member States. Canada, Greece, Portugal,

[14] Colombia, Decree 1077 of 26 May 2015; and Mauritania, Decree 2017-169.
[15] Argentina, Laws 26.522 and 26.653.
[16] Jordan, Law 20/2017.

Ukraine and Uruguay reported progress in that regard, paving the way for effective participation and contributions by persons with disabilities in matters and processes that have an impact on them, as well as on the general public. For example, Greece passed a legislative amendment establishing disability status as a "grounds of discrimination" and providing for the participation of persons with disabilities, through their representative organizations, in the monitoring process of the work of a mainstreaming mechanism, the National Council against Racism and Intolerance.

33. Limited access to the justice system often hinders the participation of persons with disabilities in society and development. The Ministry of Interior of Colombia took measures to improve accessibility in public buildings and venues to facilitate access to legal and judicial processes by persons with disabilities.

34. Recognizing the catalytic contribution that sports make in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, Canada, El Salvador and Portugal undertook initiatives to promote the participation of persons with disabilities in sports and cultural activities. Australia launched a programme that supports 16 sports in nine countries that deliver activities to address primary risk factors associated with non-communicable diseases, and inequalities experienced by women and girls with disabilities.

9. Disability data and statistics

35. Lack of quality and disaggregated data and statistics on disability remains a gap that hinders the effective implementation of evidence-based policies. Member States have sought to improve data collection and disaggregation through a variety of measures, including capacity development, the strengthening of relevant institutional mechanisms and the allocation of necessary resources. Denmark developed a data platform to track progress made towards all of the Sustainable Development Goals. Colombia established a national disability mechanism and a register for the identification and characterization of persons with disabilities". India initiated its seventy-sixth national sampling survey, covering 21 types of disabilities, and is implementing a project for a national database on persons with disabilities. Panama created a national system of statistics on persons with disabilities to integrate all relevant information about persons with disabilities into a single platform. Indonesia established local statistics offices to reach out to remote populations in archipelagos and sought to address the challenges relating to the collection of disability data that resulted from the use of different definitions of disability.

36. To improve the international comparability of disability data, Germany reported that it supported the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development Assistance Committee in applying an inclusion marker focused on disability for the systematic recording and comparability of development finance relating to the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the assessment of official development assistance. Cambodia reported that it had included a questionnaire on disability, prepared by the Washington Group on Disability Statistics,[17] in its planned 2019 census to improve the quality of disability data.

B. United Nations system

37. The United Nations system continued to support the efforts of Member States to achieve disability-inclusive development, including by mainstreaming disability

[17] A city group established under the United Nations Statistical Commission, with the key objective of addressing the urgent need for data and statistical information regarding disability that are comparable across nations. More details about the work of the Group are available at www.washingtongroup-disability.com.

across the Organization's operations, policies and programmes. In April 2018, the Secretary-General decided to conduct an institutional review of the Organization's current approach to mainstreaming disability across its operations, with a view to further strengthening concerted action by the United Nations. In addition to some positive recent developments, including the establishment of the Accessibility Centre and the availability of conference documents in Braille upon request, key entities of the United Nations system, especially members of the Inter-Agency Support Group on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, are undertaking an institutional review of the approach to accessibility and the mainstreaming of disability across the operations of the United Nations in order to improve the effectiveness of these efforts, strengthen institutional and staff capacity and improve system-wide coordination and accountability.

38. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the focal point on disability for the United Nations system, continued to lead efforts in support of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for persons with disabilities. In 2018, it prepared the first United Nations flagship report on disability and development, which provides an evidence-based analysis of the current situation of persons with disabilities in the context of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Convention at the global level. The Department continued to support intergovernmental processes to advance disability-inclusive development and translate the commitments of the 2030 Agenda and the Convention into action, in close collaboration with Governments, United Nations and regional intergovernmental partners and organizations of persons with disabilities. The Department also promoted capacity-building through training projects conducted at the regional, national and subnational levels in Africa, based upon its toolkit on disability for Africa,[18] as well as a series of capacity development workshops and advisory services offered in Asian countries and Latin America, including Argentina, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

39. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs further launched, in partnership with the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), a multi-year development account project aimed at strengthening national capacity in Argentina, Ecuador and Peru to formulate, implement, monitor and evaluate effective and evidence-based national policies and programmes for social and economic integration and the inclusion of youth with disabilities. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) continued to support States in mainstreaming disability in the implementation of the Incheon Strategy to "Make the Right Real" for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific and the Beijing Action Plan to Accelerate the Implementation of the Incheon Strategy (see ESCAP/74/22/Add.1, annex), including by establishing a statistical baseline on the status of persons with disabilities in the Asia and the Pacific region. It also facilitated international cooperation, including South-South cooperation, for the mainstreaming of disability in development in Asia-Pacific countries.

40. Specialized agencies, funds and programmes continued to promote disability-inclusive development in their different areas of work. The International Labour Organization produced publications and policy tools on social protection, vocational training and employment for persons with disabilities[19] and collaborated with the private sector and trade unions to promote the employment of persons with disabilities. The World Health Organization (WHO) continued its work, in accordance with the WHO global disability action plan 2014–2021,[20] to remove barriers and

[18] Available at www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/2016/11/toolkit-on-disability-for-africa-2.

[19] International Labour Organization, *World Social Protection Report 2017-19: Universal Social Protection to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals* (Geneva, International Labour Office, 2017).

[20] Available at www.who.int/disabilities/actionplan/en.

facilitate access to health-care services, especially those related to rehabilitation and assistive products. A priority list of assistive products[21] was launched by WHO and endorsed by the World Health Assembly in 2018 to promote the inclusion of priority assistive products as part of universal health care.

41. To reach those left furthest behind, in 2017, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) issued the Disability Inclusion Guidelines aimed at operationalizing the commitments in the Charter on the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action. UNRWA further reported on its first round of training sessions on the Guidelines for 250 staff members,[22] as well as on its carrying out of disability-inclusive programmes in education, relief and social services and protection. The United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction is strengthening a new stakeholder mechanism that is engaging organizations of persons with disabilities in key global and regional processes, addressing their needs and perspectives in the context of disaster risk reduction and risk-informed sustainable development, urban resilience and financing for development.

42. The urgency of increasing and improving the availability of quality and reliable disability data for the design, implementation and evaluation of development policies has also been noted by United Nations entities. The Statistics Division is coordinating the work of an expert group to update the Guidelines and Principles for the Development of Disability Statistics. As the secretariat of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators, it also coordinates work related to methodological instruments to improve disability statistics and data disaggregation, in order to define the dimensions of disaggregation of the Sustainable Development Goal indicators. ECLAC and ESCAP are making efforts, within their respective regions, to support Member States in their efforts to improve the quality of disability statistics in their national statistical systems from the disability perspective and build capacity on data collection methodologies to facilitate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for persons with disabilities. WHO, together with the World Bank, developed and is implementing the long and brief versions of the model disability survey. In addition, WHO is working with over 20 countries to strengthen their national statistical systems. The United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction issued guidance notes in 2017 on the use and recording of disaster loss information and provided training sessions on the collection and use of data disaggregated by disability.

C. Civil society

43. Civil society organizations, including organizations of persons with disabilities, working in collaboration with local governments, international organizations, other like-minded organizations and the private sector, have taken action to accelerate the implementation of disability-inclusive sustainable development. Some organizations continued their efforts to mainstream disability into government policies and programmes and to mobilize resources, focusing on poverty, employment, education and accessibility. The World Blind Union, for example, advocated for a comprehensive accessibility act to be enacted at the regional level, within the frameworks of the African Union and the European Union. The World Blind Union also collaborated with software companies to develop affordable navigation and real-time transport schedule apps. The Global Initiative for Inclusive Information and Communication Technologies, together with the International Telecommunication Union (ITU),

[21] www.who.int/phi/implementation/assistive_technology/global_survey-apl/en.

[22] United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, Disability Inclusion Guidelines (2017). Available at www.unrwa.org/sites/default/files/content/resources/disability_inclusion_guidelines.pdf.

launched an initiative on model policies on information and communications technology accessibility for web and audiovisual programming, mobile phones, public access points and public procurement.[23] It also carried out consultative activities and facilitated cooperation agreements for the development of policies on the accessibility of information and communications technology with Brazil, India, Myanmar and other countries. The European Disability Forum supported the development of accessible transport vehicles and multi-modal terminals for public transportation as part of efforts towards the creation of a multi-modal travel chain and ticketing system that will enable persons with disabilities and older persons to travel across the European Union without barriers.

44. Civil society organizations also highlighted the importance of inclusive monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, including through the voluntary national review process. As one organization (Sightsavers) highlighted, there existed a need for more information about how civil society could engage with the reporting process. It was further recommended that coordination efforts among government departments on disability issues be increased and that enhanced support be provided for the engagement of organizations of persons with disabilities.

D. Multi-stakeholder partnerships

45. Given the cross-cutting nature of disability, which requires a whole community approach, in recent years multi-stakeholder partnerships have emerged as a promising means for advancing disability-inclusive development. For instance, in Bangladesh, 5,286 union digital centres were established. These are one-stop service-provider centres run by "citizen entrepreneurs" at the community level, aimed at delivering vital information and public services to underserved populations, including persons with disabilities in rural areas. By bringing together the private sector, local governments and citizens themselves, market relevance and sensitivity to citizens' needs were well embedded in these successful bottom-up multi-stakeholder partnerships. They greatly supported the Government in making basic public services universally available. Australia supported Vanuatu in the Vanuatu Skills Partnership, a locally led cross-sectoral initiative that engaged participants and sought contributions from a wide range of stakeholders, including persons with disabilities, in sectors such as tourism, handicrafts and agribusiness. The initiative of Germany on fighting the causes of flight and reintegrating refugees included a focus on persons with disabilities in Iraq, Jordan and South Sudan, with a view to supporting them, as well as their families and communities.

IV. From policy to practice: ways to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda by, for and with persons with disabilities

46. In June 2018, the eleventh session of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities re-emphasized that the concrete implementation of the Convention was essential and that countries should effect development policies and changes in investment and legal systems in line with the Convention in order to fulfil the central pledge of the 2030 Agenda to leave no one behind. Full and equal opportunities should be ensured for persons with disabilities for their full participation in society and development. In that regard, new approaches and tools must be sought for mainstreaming disability in national legislation and

[23] Available at www.itu.int/pub/D-PHCB-SIS_A.01.

development strategies, including by raising awareness, promoting accessibility, strengthening the frameworks concerning disability at the multilateral and global level, and continuing and expanding United Nations support to Member States.

47. The preceding sections of the present report have reviewed the international normative frameworks guiding the inclusion and mainstreaming of disability in the current global development context. They have examined the progress achieved by Member States, the United Nations system and civil society in their efforts to promote the rights and well-being of persons with disabilities and to strengthen the mainstreaming of disability in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Based on the findings of the review, some key observations can be made to further advance inclusive development for persons with disabilities.

A. Mainstreaming disability as an integral part of efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals

48. Disability has been recognized as a cross-cutting issue since the midterm review of the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals. A range of policies in different sectors is necessary to advance disability-inclusive development and to mainstream disability in development. Mainstreaming disability requires ensuring that the needs, concerns, perspectives and contributions of persons with disabilities are fully taken into account and incorporated into the design, implementation and evaluation of the development of relevant sectoral policies and programmes. Initiatives taken by countries in different regions demonstrate that successful policy interventions often include measures to remove physical, institutional and attitudinal barriers and create enabling environments and conditions that allow all persons with disabilities to participate in and contribute to development on an equal basis with others. It is important to ensure that public services, including clean water and sanitation, public transportation and information and communication technologies, be made universally available in a responsive manner to meet the needs of persons with disabilities. Decent work and other income-generating opportunities, as well as social protection floors, are vital for all, especially persons with disabilities, as a means of being lifted out of poverty and securing a sustained and decent livelihood. Of equal importance is investment in human capital and the empowerment of persons with disabilities to compete in labour markets and to pursue their ambitions and entrepreneurship by ensuring their equal access to quality education and skills training opportunities, as well as a variety of financial means and instruments. Necessary resource commitments, including budget allocations and capacity-building, are required. What is most needed, however, is a transformative change that integrates "disability" as a cross-cutting issue in all development agendas and efforts. To this end, awareness concerning the rights, capabilities and contributions of persons with disabilities should be further raised to challenge stereotypes and to change mindsets among policymakers, development professionals, civil society, the private sector and the public at large. Renewed commitments to taking concrete action for the inclusion of persons with disabilities are also necessary.

49. To further promote disability mainstreaming and inclusive development for persons with disabilities, the international community can learn from the experience of advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women. The adoption of the visionary Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action at the Fourth World Conference on Women, in 1995, set a model in terms of empowering people and ensuring equal opportunities and enabling conditions for their full participation, including in decision-making. To make a significant difference in narrowing the existing gaps and achieving equality, the actual and potential contribution of persons with disabilities must not be overlooked. With the strong political commitments to disability-inclusive

sustainable development, a critical path change is needed to move from good policy intent to an agenda and strategy for action.

50. Disability, as a cross-cutting global issue, should also be mainstreamed in United Nations conferences and their processes and outcomes in relation to all three pillars of the work of the United Nations: peace and security, development and human rights. It should also be included in processes relating to migration, including the Intergovernmental Conference to Adopt the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration,[24] to be held in Marrakech, Morocco, in December 2018, and the International Migration Review Forum to be established in 2022.

B. Promoting accessibility: an essential condition for inclusive and sustainable development for all

51. To achieve the Sustainable Development Goals for all, Member States have taken initiatives and efforts to remove existing barriers for persons with disabilities in compliance with international and domestic legal requirements. Accessibility is well established under the Convention, which sets out the relevant responsibilities of States parties. Accessibility is a means of ensuring equality and non-discrimination and a precondition for ensuring the inclusion of persons with disabilities. It is also an improvement of infrastructure that facilitates the equal participation and the flourishing in society of all citizens, regardless of their abilities or disabilities.

52. It has been increasingly demonstrated that accessibility is also a collective good, with socioeconomic benefits not only for persons with disabilities, but also for other members of society.[25] Investing in accessibility, in line with the principles of universal design,[26] is increasingly embraced as a smart investment.[27] It is also essential for advancing inclusive and sustainable development in all its dimensions: social inclusion, economic growth and environmental sustainability.

C. Reducing disability data gaps

53. To ensure that the commitment to "leave no one behind" is translated into effective action, an accurate understanding of the situation and needs of target populations is critical. Yet, there remains a lack of data disaggregated by disability (see E/2016/75). Emphasizing the importance of high quality, accessible, timely and

[24] In the negotiated draft of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, Heads of State and Government and High Representatives agree to take action by applying approaches that are human rights-based, gender- and disability-responsive, and age- and-child-sensitive. The full text of the draft is available at www.un.org/pga/72/wp-content/uploads/sites/51/2018/07/migration.pdf.

[25] For example, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *Good Practices of Accessible Urban Development: Making Urban Environments Inclusive and Fully Accessible to All*; International Transport Forum, "Economic benefits of improving transport accessibility" (Paris, OECD Publishing, 2017); and Global Initiative for Inclusive Information and Communication Technologies, "Benefits and costs of e-accessibility" (2012).

[26] According to article 2 of the Convention, "universal design" means the design of products, environments, programmes and services to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design.

[27] Case studies demonstrated that, by investing in accessibility, at least six benefits and competitive advantages could be attained by businesses, including (a) reaching new markets, (b) maximizing employee engagement and productivity, (c) provisioning high quality products and services, (d) improving supply chain management, (e) building partner and community relations and (f) minimizing risk of legal action. See OneVoice for Accessible Information and Communication Technologies, "Accessible information and communication technologies: benefits to business and society" (2010).

reliable data and statistics to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, ministers and high representatives at the 2018 high-level political forum on sustainable development adopted a declaration in which they urged countries to further strengthen collaboration at the bilateral, regional and global levels for capacity-building and sharing of best practices for collecting, producing, disseminating, analysing and using quality data and statistics, disaggregated by disability (see E/HLS/2018/1, para. 18). In addressing the existing disability data gaps, the Statistical Commission and the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on the Sustainable Development Goal Indicators have important roles to play, in particular, in their ongoing work for the development of disability-related Sustainable Development Goal indicators, indexes and tools, in making available statistical data that are disaggregated by disability status.

D. Strengthening the global frameworks and mechanisms relating to disability

54. There exist a number of mechanisms that can be further strengthened to review, follow up and assess progress on the implementation of the global normative frameworks for disability-inclusive development. At the high-level political forum on sustainable development, the main and central platform for the review of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, greater attention has been accorded to disability, as Member States have increasingly included references to disability in their voluntary national reviews.[28] The Forum has great potential to address the existing gaps and challenges facing Member States in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals for persons with disabilities, through its consideration of disability-specific issues under different Goals each year in both voluntary national reviews and the thematic debates of the forum.

55. In response to the mandates of the General Assembly, the Secretary-General submits quinquennial and biennial reports on disability and development. The former provide a longitudinal study on issues and trends relating to disability and development, while the latter review progress made in the advancement of disability-inclusive development. Pursuant to the request of the General Assembly in its resolution 69/142, the first United Nations flagship report on disability and development: realizing the Sustainable Development Goals by, for and with persons with disabilities, was prepared in 2018. The report, which is aimed at providing an overall assessment of the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals for persons with disabilities, is a United Nations system-wide effort that demonstrates the importance of presenting evidence, in the form of periodic monitoring and evaluation, in a single official report to better inform Member States and other stakeholders regarding the implementation of the Goals for persons with disabilities.

56. Over the past two decades, the Commission for Social Development has been an important intergovernmental mechanism on disability.[29] The changing global development landscape calls for a strengthened Commission to carry out this important role, including by monitoring and following up the 2030 Agenda in relation to persons with disabilities. In response to a call by the General Assembly and the

[28] In 2016, only 15 (out of 22) reporting countries mentioned disability in their voluntary national reviews; in 2017 and 2018, respectively, 33 (out of 43) and 42 (out of 46) countries did so and reported on their national progress in implementing relevant Sustainable Development Goals for persons with disabilities.

[29] The Commission played a leading role in the drafting of the Convention and also established the former Special Rapporteur on Disability as the first independent international mechanism for monitoring the implementation of the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities.

Economic and Social Council,[30] the Commission could, within its existing mandates, regularize the annual organization of the multi-stakeholder panel discussion on the advancement of persons with disabilities in sustainable development, with the aim of reviewing progress, identifying gaps and challenges, sharing good practices and experiences, and generating substantive and action-oriented recommendations on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for persons with disabilities as an outcome of the panel discussion.

57. Since its establishment in 2008, the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities has played a unique role in the monitoring of the Convention, as both a human rights and a development framework, and has promoted the rights of persons with disabilities in the global agenda. In the course of its 11 sessions to date, the Conference has also served as a forum for sharing good practices in the implementation of the Convention and relevant internationally agreed development goals, including the 2030 Agenda, for persons with disabilities. Given the importance of the Convention as a guiding framework for the implementation of the global agenda by, for and with persons with disabilities, the Conference, as a mechanism to support implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, can be further strengthened by ensuring the increased participation of delegations and experts with disabilities from the least developed and developing countries in its sessions.

58. As the inclusion of disability in many existing follow-up and review processes relating to the Sustainable Development Goals has been hindered by the lack of quality and disaggregated data on disability,[31] urgent action is needed to ensure that disability-specific Goal indicators are included, data disaggregated by disability status are collected and periodic assessments and reporting take place in relevant forums and mechanisms.

E. Linking global and regional actions

59. The United Nations system, including its regional commissions, together with Member States and other major stakeholders, has been undertaking new initiatives by linking actions at the global level with those at the regional level and thereby promoting disability-inclusive development in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals. Initiatives taken have ranged from strengthening regional policies, strategies and plans of action, to increasing resource commitments, to establishing new institutions. For example, at the thirty-sixth session of ECLAC, held in May 2016, Member States established the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development as a regional mechanism to follow up and review the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda.[32] ESCAP has been supporting Member States in achieving the Goals for persons with disabilities through the implementation of the Incheon Strategy to "Make the Right Real" for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific, a regional framework with the first set of regionally agreed disability-specific development goals. The 10 goals are accompanied by 27 targets and 62 indicators (see ESCAP/74/22/Add.1, annex).

[30] General Assembly resolution 71/165 and Economic and Social Council resolution 2017/12.

[31] For example, in the reports on progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals that have already been issued, there is only one (E/2018/64) in which disability-specific data were available, indicating that only 28 per cent of persons with severe disabilities collected disability cash benefits.

[32] The Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 2016/12, subsequently endorsed the establishment of the Forum.

V. Recommendations

60. **In the light of the above, the following recommendations on accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by, for and with persons with disabilities may be considered:**

(a) **Member States should review and strengthen national policies, strategies and plans of action aimed at the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals to ensure that the rights, needs, perspectives and participation of persons with disabilities are included and mainstreamed systematically in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and its follow-up and review;**

(b) **Member States, the United Nations system, international development institutions and other stakeholders, including the private sector, should proactively promote accessibility and increase relevant investment, applying "universal design", for achieving sustainable urban and rural development for all;**

(c) **Member States, the United Nations system and other stakeholders should continue giving due consideration to disability as a cross-cutting issue in forthcoming global conferences, meetings and processes addressing the three pillars of the United Nations: peace and security, development and human rights. Specific attention should be given to the persistent marginalization of persons with disabilities through awareness-raising, policy interventions and measures to address multi-faceted discrimination and inequalities faced by persons with disabilities, including, in particular, women, children, older persons, the deafblind, persons with intellectual and psychosocial disabilities, indigenous persons, refugees and migrants and those living under adverse circumstances, for example, those who experience negative impacts in instances of natural disasters or humanitarian crises and emergencies;**

(d) **Member States and the United Nations system, in the context of monitoring the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, should (i) address existing data gaps by expediting the establishment of a set of clear and measurable disability-related Sustainable Development Goal indicators and (ii) commit necessary resources for capacity-building with regard to the collection and analysis of disability-disaggregated data and statistics to strengthen the evidence base and periodical reporting on the situation of persons with disabilities;**

(e) **Member States, the United Nations system, development agencies and other stakeholders should further promote international cooperation for advancing disability-inclusive development, including North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation and multi-stakeholder partnerships and networking among experts and practitioners on sustainable development, to further the sharing of information, experience, knowledge and best practices and to unlock greater resources in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals by, for and with persons with disabilities. United Nations entities should continue to expand their work to support Governments and develop their capacity for implementing disability-inclusive development;**

(f) **Member States may wish to regularize an annual multi-stakeholder panel discussion on the advancement of the status of persons with disabilities within the framework of the Commission for Social Development, with a view to promoting disability-inclusive development in the context of the 2030 Agenda.**

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Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly: review of relevant United Nations plans and programmes of action pertaining to the situation of social groups: World Programme of Action for Youth

Policies and programmes involving youth

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted pursuant to Commission for Social Development resolution 55/1. It provides an analysis of three areas important to young people, namely, education, employment and gender equality, contained in the resolution and in reports on progress and developments in those areas. The report also highlights the initiatives undertaken by Member States, United Nations entities and organizations led by young people towards the implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and concludes with key recommendations for consideration by the Commission.

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I. Introduction

1. The Commission for Social Development, in its resolution 55/1 on policies and programmes involving youth, requested the Secretary-General to submit a comprehensive report at its fifty-seventh session on the implementation of the resolution, including progress on the achievements and challenges in the realization of the World Programme of Action for Youth.

2. The present report includes information received from, among others, Member States,[1] the United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development[2] and the European Youth Forum, as well from reviewing recent practices and policies by Member State contained in the voluntary national reviews to the high-level political forum on sustainable development.

3. The report contains an examination of the implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to achieve better results for young people. In particular, it delves into the World Programme of Action in relation to employment, education and gender equality. Progress and developments in those areas are also reviewed. It also highlights the activities undertaken by United Nations entities and organizations led by young people towards the implementation of the World Programme of Action and the 2030 Agenda and concludes with recommendations.

II. Implementing the World Programme of Action for Youth and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to improve outcomes for young people

A. World Programme of Action for Youth and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: interlinkages and the role of data

4. The 2030 Agenda is intended to reach all social groups, including young people, who are referred to both explicitly and implicitly in it. It recognizes the role of young people as agents of change and includes references to them in the targets and indicators of the Sustainable Development Goals. With 90 indicators identified by the Secretariat as being strongly related to youth development, improving the situation of young people is necessary for implementing the 2030 Agenda.[3]

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[1] Austria, Azerbaijan, Colombia, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Myanmar, the Niger, the Philippines, Qatar, Slovenia, Timor-Leste, Turkey and Uruguay.

[2] The United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development is led by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, its permanent co-Chair, and a rotating co-Chair (the International Labour Organization for 2017–2018 and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) for 2018–2019). The following Network members contributed to the report: the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, the International Labour Organization, the International Telecommunication Union, Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, the Office of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, the United Nations Population Fund, the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, United Nations Volunteers and the World Health Organization.

[3] United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *World Youth Report: Youth and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. Available at www.un.org/development/desa/youth/.

5. The implementation of the 2030 Agenda for young people is closely related to the implementation of existing youth-specific and adolescent-specific international instruments, frameworks and United Nations resolutions [4] that remain crucial resources for the development of policies and programmes concerning young people.

6. In particular, the World Programme of Action for Youth, which recognizes young people as a major resource for development efforts, has 15 priority areas,[5] which are covered to varying degrees in the 2030 Agenda or addressed directly in the Sustainable Development Goals. Several of those areas are stand-alone goals (i.e., the World Programme of Action priority on education is covered by Goal 4 on quality education), while others are considered together, such as health, substance abuse and HIV/AIDS, which are considered under Goal 3 on good health and well-being (A/72/190, para. 9). Consequently, efforts to implement the World Programme of Action would accelerate progress towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

7. The achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals depends on the localization of the 2030 Agenda to address national priorities and on the development of evidence-based national policies, including youth policies. Similarly, the mainstreaming of youth issues into broader policies and planning serves to address the multifaceted challenges faced by young people.

8. While the 2030 Agenda and other national, regional and international frameworks can provide the impetus for the development and implementation of youth policies, timely and accurate data and evidence are required to build effective responses to issues of concern to young people (ibid., paras. 17 and 20). In this connection, the global indicator framework of the 2030 Agenda provides additional opportunities to collect data on the situation of young people, including in areas that were not previously measured using the World Programme of Action for Youth indicators, to create a more accurate picture.

9. Nevertheless, age disaggregation is key to efforts to producing such data. While age-disaggregation is encouraged for all Sustainable Development Goal indicators, greater efforts and resources are needed to support national statistics and data systems to meet this ambition. The lack of robust demographic disaggregated data poses an even greater barrier to the development of evidence-based youth policies to improve the lives of marginalized and vulnerable young people, given that there are little data worldwide about the situation of specific youth populations, such as indigenous young people, young migrants and refugees, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender young people and those with disabilities. Without robust and disaggregated data, policymakers are given only a partial view of the situation of young people. This can lead to the development of policies that, although well intentioned, inadvertently fail to address or even divert scarce resources from addressing the challenges faced by many young people who are out of sight.

10. The use of reliable data in policy and programme design, implementation and evaluation has numerous benefits, including a better understanding of the situation of young people and the ability to track it over time, improved communication of policy and programme outcomes and allowing for better planned, timely, targeted and transparent interventions. The data can also help to enhance accountability, given that

[4] These include the World Programme of Action for Youth, the Global Accelerated Action for the Health of Adolescents (AA-HA!) framework, the Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth, the United Nations Youth Strategy and Security Council resolutions 2250 (2015) and 2419 (2018).

[5] The 15 areas are education, employment, hunger and poverty, health, environment, substance abuse, juvenile justice, leisure-time activities, girls and young women, the full and effective participation of young people in the life of society and in decision-making, globalization, information and communication technologies, HIV/AIDS, armed conflict and intergenerational issues. See General Assembly resolution 50/81.

they can be used to hold governments to their commitments regarding youth development.

11. For data to be useful for measuring youth development, they must be timely, accurate, relevant, interpretable, accessible and coherent. Quality data on young people that are publicly available and easily understandable (by age, sex and geography, as well as any other demographic attributes) can lead to better designed, targeted and relevant policies and programmes. Access to such quality and localized data also makes the accurate monitoring and evaluation of evidence-informed policies on youth development possible.

12. The indicator framework of the World Programme of Action for Youth, developed in 2012, consists of 34 core indicators and 15 supplementary ones designed to be adaptable to national contexts. This framework could provide data on areas not covered or where disaggregation is not called for in the Sustainable Development Goals. The combined Goal and World Programme of Action indicators therefore provide a comprehensive resource for measuring and tracking youth development. In that connection, the statistical annex to the most recent *World Youth Report* collates global and regional data available for the 90 Goal indicators relevant to young people, as well as for the 34 core indicators for the World Programme of Action. It is concluded in the report that the vast potential of these indicators to measure youth development is constrained by data availability.[5]

13. Numerous tools and frameworks have been developed to improve the collection and measurement of data on youth development and have contributed to the availability of data on young people. For example, the Commonwealth secretariat's global Youth Development Index, developed in 2016, measures progress in youth development in 183 countries based on 18 indicators. The Youth Development Index of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, launched in July 2017, uses various indicators closely related to the Association's workplan on youth for the period 2016–2020, and serves as an instrument for evidence-based policy formulation in the region and in the planning of new interventions and programmes for young people. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) adolescent country tracker is an outcome-based framework and a proposed set of indicators closely linked to the Sustainable Development Goals. Lastly, the Youth Progress Index[6] is the first-ever tool to measure the quality of life of young people and provide scores to various countries based on their performance in the Index's three main categories that measure basic human needs, foundations of well-being and opportunity.

B. Progress in the implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth

1. New national youth policies or issue-specific youth policies, programmes and legislation

14. In line with the World Programme of Action for Youth and 2030 Agenda, some governments demonstrated sustained commitment to supporting the needs and aspirations of young people and to responding to the issues facing them in their communities by adopting or revising youth policies, strategies, action plans or

[6] A joint initiative of European Youth Forum, Deloitte, the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights and the Social Progress Imperative, in collaboration with the International Organization of Employers.

legislation on young people.[7] Others are in the process of doing so.[8] Efforts have also been undertaken to measure and evaluate those policies and to strengthen data disaggregation to better capture the situation of young people, such as in Ireland and the Netherlands.

15. United Nations entities and civil society stakeholders have contributed to these efforts by providing policy support, resources or technical assistance to Member States for the development of national youth policies, action plans, related frameworks or legislation.[9]

16. In some instances, in which national youth policies are not in place, Member States have developed sectoral youth-related policies at the local, regional and national levels in health, transport and participation, as well as in education, employment and gender and the empowerment of women, which are highlighted in the sections below.

17. Member States have also continued to mainstream youth development into a broader range of other sectoral policy frameworks, including health, social inclusion, security and the prevention of extremism, as well as into sustainable development policies and programming by creating mechanisms such as inter-agency or interministerial committees on young people. For example, Indonesia's Presidential Decree No. 66/2017 on strategic cross-sectoral coordination for youth development was designed to strengthen coordination among ministries and related institutions for the implementation of the country's legislation on young people. Other Member States, such as Cyprus, have established intragovernmental coordination committees to develop youth-related policies, strategies or action plans.

18. Other types of youth development frameworks, including regional ones, continue to offer guidance on national youth policies, and Member States have aligned and coordinated their policies with those of regional bodies or organizations. The Ibero-American Youth Pact, a framework and alliance for developing policies, programmes and initiatives by the International Youth Organization for Ibero-America for young people, was signed in 2016.[10] The European Union plans to adopt a new youth strategy for the period 2019–2027, with three main areas of action, namely, youth participation, volunteering and solidarity and youth work, upon the end of its current strategy in 2018. With regard to regional development cooperation to enhance youth policies, the Youth Inclusion project, co-financed by the European Union and implemented by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, has been analysing policies for young people in several developing and emerging economies and produced a toolkit on evidence-based policymaking for the well-being of young people.[11]

19. Member States have worked to include or mainstream youth development into national sustainable development efforts. For example, Hungary included youth

[7] Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, the Comoros, Cyprus, Greece, Indonesia, Kiribati, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Malawi, the Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Myanmar, the Philippines, the Republic of Moldova, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste and Uganda.

[8] Albania, Austria, Croatia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ghana, Kenya, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Qatar and the United Republic of Tanzania, as well as Kosovo, which reference shall be understood to be in the context of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

[9] Including in Bangladesh, Indonesia, Kiribati, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, the Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Montenegro and Somalia.

[10] The International Youth Organization for Ibero-America comprises 21 member countries in the Americas and Europe.

[11] Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, *Evidence-based Policy Making for Youth Well-being: A Toolkit* (Paris, 2017).

development in its national strategy on sustainable development, and, in the light of the importance of young people in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, the Ministry of Youth in Azerbaijan has engaged in national coordinating efforts and councils for sustainable development. South Africa adopted its Integrated Youth Development Strategy and Plan, which is both an implementation plan of its National Youth Policy (2020) and a mainstreaming, coordination and monitoring tool to ensure that youth development is integrated into all policies in all sectors. Zimbabwe held a two-day seminar in 2018 on the mainstreaming of young people into various government policies, which led to the identification of several concrete measures such as the designation of a youth focal point in each ministry.

2. Enabling environments for youth participation, including to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals

20. Given that the implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals require the participation of young people, youth-led and youth-focused organizations and many Member States have created enabling environments for the engagement of young people by establishing national youth structures and councils, participatory mechanisms for young people and consultations with them through organized youth structures, discussion platforms and online avenues. Governments have also strengthened coordination regarding young people,[12] including by establishing youth policy advisory councils. At the global level, a growing number of countries incorporate youth delegates in their delegations into intergovernmental processes, including the high-level political forum on sustainable development, and establish youth delegate programmes to ensure a more lasting policy impact year-round.

21. Youth-led initiatives are supporting the realization of the 2030 Agenda around the world, including in Australia and Ireland, where young people are mobilizing to advance the Sustainable Development Goals in the country and abroad. In addition, governments have continued to ensure the participation of young people in their efforts regarding the Goals, including in Egypt, which formed a group of students from various universities throughout the country to raise awareness of sustainable development and the 2030 Agenda, thereby increasing the engagement of young people in the follow-up and review processes. Effective follow-up and review, including through voluntary national reviews, is important for continued action and progress in achieving the Goals, and some countries, such as Hungary and the Netherlands, have invited young people to take an active role in the process. Slovenia included a report from the Slovenia National Youth Council and the participation of a United Nations Youth Delegate in its voluntary national review in 2017, while the United Nations Youth Delegates of Ireland also drafted a report, entitled *Generation for Change: Spotlight Report on Young People, the Sustainable Development Goals and Ireland 2018*, on a youth perspective on the country's voluntary national review and presented it at the 2018 high-level political forum on sustainable development.

III. Focus areas

A. Education and skills development

22. At the global level, progress towards achieving universal primary education continued, and there was increased demand for secondary schooling. At the regional level, however, deep disparities remain, with secondary and tertiary enrolment lower

[12] Albania, the Comoros, France, Germany, Kenya, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Pakistan, the Republic of Moldova, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Uganda.

in many developing countries, in particular in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, than in other regions, including Europe and North America. Member States have continued to highlight the complementarity of non-formal education to develop young people's full and lifelong education and have promoted access to it, in addition to ongoing efforts to ensure access to formal education at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels.

23. There is growing awareness of the need for education systems to adequately prepare young people for the future and ensure their acquisition of the relevant skills needed in a rapidly changing workplace.[13] At the national level, efforts have been made towards the achievement of target 4.4 of the Sustainable Development Goals on relevant skills for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship. Efforts have also been made by some Member States to develop national strategies to deliver education systems that are responsive to future labour market needs (Ireland and Romania), while others introduced curriculum reforms to integrate twenty-first century skills and competencies into the national curriculums at all education levels (Albania, Austria and Mexico).

24. Skills development programmes to improve the employability of jobseekers by offering practical assistance, including soft skills, were introduced (Bahamas, Ecuador, Ireland and Hungary) and helped countries to generate appropriately skilled workers. To facilitate the school-to-work transition, Member States have adopted or are developing technical and vocational education and training policies and programmes, which play a crucial role in equipping young people with practical knowledge, skills and competencies for work, and provided education that helps to bridge the school-to-work transition (e.g., Chile, Greece, Latvia, Namibia and Sri Lanka). Lebanon launched a National Strategic Framework for Technical and Vocational Education and Training, with the support of UNICEF and the International Labour Organization (ILO), while Cambodia developed a stand-alone National Technical Vocational Education and Training Policy for the period 2017–2025 to support its industrial sector development and decent job creation. Pakistan developed its first-ever technical and vocational education and training policy, which includes, as its first objective, a focus on youth employment. Difficulties, however, in ensuring that technical and vocational education and training policies and initiatives respond to market needs endure, on the basis of the lack of data or the use of outdated information on economic needs and sectors in which opportunities exist.

25. To contend with the rapid pace of technological development, recent policy frameworks have placed an emphasis on the use of information and communication technology (ICT) in education, especially for Member States that are moving towards more knowledge-based economies (Botswana, Mozambique, Nepal, Rwanda and Zimbabwe). Other Member States have advanced their technology education agenda by focusing on the competent and responsible use of ICT and the creation of digital learning environments (Italy, the Republic of Korea and Singapore). In the context of increasing competition in global markets, national strategies for higher education have been established, with a strong focus on innovation, research and entrepreneurship (Hungary, Ireland and the United Arab Emirates).

26. While skills development for the world of work constitutes a priority in education policies, ensuring the acquisition of basic skills remained a challenge for numerous Member States, where adolescents and young adults are not meeting minimum standards in reading and mathematics. In the face of a global learning crisis, strengthening basic literacy and numeracy skills and improving the quality of learning

[13] Cynthia Lunn Scott, "The futures of learning 2: what kind of learning for the 21st century?", Education Research and Foresight Working Papers (Paris, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2015).

through early preparation, teacher training and learning assessment were identified as priority areas in several national policies of Member States (Australia, Malta, the Niger, Togo and Zambia).

27. Inclusive formal and non-formal education allows individuals to grow and develop through quality learning, regardless of sex, social origin, language, economic situation or ability. Fostering inclusive educational environments requires reaching excluded and marginalized young people through the implementation of inclusive policies and programmes that eliminate barriers and lead to the participation of and respect for the diverse needs of young people. Disparities, however, in youth education in terms of socioeconomic background, urban-rural divide, ethnic origin and gender remain widespread.

28. Intensified efforts targeted at young people at higher risk of marginalization, including those with disabilities, indigenous young people, rural young people, young people living in poverty, migrant and refugee young people and young women and girls, are therefore needed to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 4. To ensure that "no one is left behind", it is critical that inclusion and equity in education remain key policy goals for Member States, as they have in examples shared by Chile and Ghana. As part of its National Basic Plan for the Promotion of Education for the period 2018–2022, Japan implemented reforms to ensure financial support for those in need, including a reduction in the financial burden on low-income families for education in non-mandatory levels. Australia has provided loans with payment deferral until after graduation and funded rural and regional enterprise scholarships to support students from rural and remote areas.

29. Some Member States have developed special orientation, language, culture or labour market integration classes for young asylum seekers and refugees in "receiver" countries. In Austria, targeted language support courses for foreign students and refugees were provided in schools, while Greece created reception classes for refugee and migrant students in public schools in areas characterized as zones of educational priority. In Lesotho, a mobile digital library project was relaunched and provided access to information and knowledge for its particularly disadvantaged rural communities.

30. The promotion of gender equality in education, especially through increasing the participation of girls and young women in science, technology, engineering and mathematics education, became a focus area in several national agendas, including in Australia and Malaysia. The Gambia has an increasing focus on the improvement in the employable skills of and job opportunities for women and girls by ensuring access to primary, secondary and tertiary education.

31. Quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all are central to ensuring a full and productive life for all individuals and for the realization of sustainable development. In this regard, quality assurance in higher education has gained significant momentum worldwide, and new quality assurance models have been adopted at the higher education level (Chile and Sweden). Some countries have intensified their efforts to improve both school infrastructure and teacher qualifications (Austria, Chile, Croatia, Greece, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Mexico and Sweden).

32. To ensure that education is linked to national environment priorities and sustainable development more broadly, Member States have increasingly championed education for sustainable development initiatives and programmes, including the World's Largest Lesson initiative, produced by Project Everyone delivered in partnership with, among others, UNICEF, to promote the Sustainable Development Goals among young people (Australia, Bhutan, Hungary and Madagascar). In Egypt, the Sustainable Development Action initiative adopted an integrated approach

towards sustainable awareness and education to empower young people as sustainability ambassadors, while Ireland adopted a National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development for the period 2014–2020 to ensure that education contributes to sustainable development and that young people are empowered as informed and active citizens.

33. Global citizenship education has been promoted through curriculum reforms and training programmes (the Gambia and Ghana) and through human rights education programmes (Madagascar). To encourage peaceful coexistence among communities in Kenya, a peace education programme was implemented, which included the strengthening of teachers' capacity for promoting values and the use of transformative pedagogy to foster peace-promoting behaviour among learners.

34. To address the educational needs of children and young people in emergency situations, Member States have provided assistance to international initiatives such as the Education Cannot Wait Fund and committed themselves to including education as part of their development assistance. Cuba has shared its experiences on literacy and its literacy method with other countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. Ireland, through the Irish Aid Development Education Strategy for the period 2017–2023, encourages nationals to reflect on their roles and responsibilities as global citizens and to take action for a fairer and more sustainable future.

B. Employment

35. While the global economy has recovered, high rates of youth unemployment persist. With an estimated 70.9 million young people unemployed in 2017, the youth unemployment rate remains twice that of the total unemployment rate,[14] and that number is expected to rise to 71.1 million in 2018.[15] Member States in various regions and at different economic development stages, including Albania, Australia, the Bahamas, Bhutan, Cabo Verde, Egypt, Greece, Ireland, Mali, Lebanon, Namibia, Spain and Sri Lanka, identify a variety of challenges in relation to youth development, often underscoring the formidable problem of stubbornly elevated rates of youth unemployment.

36. Combating disproportionately high rates of youth unemployment at the national level, as well as disparities in youth employment levels within countries, specifically between rural and urban areas, therefore remains a priority for Member States as they implement their commitments to youth development under the World Programme of Action for Youth and the 2030 Agenda. To challenge lacklustre youth employment levels, Member States have been creating jobs in the green economy, including for young people (Cambodia, Canada and Greece), which presents high potential for growth, in particular in rural areas (e.g., in Rwanda).

37. Member States are paying special attention to young people not in education, employment or training and have developed targeted inventions to encourage their reintegration, including through regional programmes such as the European Union's Youth Guarantee (e.g., in Malta).

38. Securing employment remains a challenge for young people, with short-term contracts, unpaid or low-paid internships and part-time work often seen as a key path to the labour market. When young people can find jobs, high rates of underemployment, vulnerable employment and informal employment are widespread,

[14] United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *Promoting Inclusion through Social Protection. Report on the World Social Situation 2018. Executive Summary* (New York, 2018).

[15] International Labour Organization, *Global Employment Trends for Youth 2017: Paths to a Better Working Future* (Geneva, 2017).

leaving many young people in situations of working poverty or in jobs that have limited access to social protection and adequate labour standards. This is particularly striking in emerging economies and in the developing world, where 39 per cent of young workers live in situations of moderate or extreme poverty, earning less than $3.10 a day.[15]

39. Many young people hold low-paying and precarious employment in the informal rural economy, given that agriculture is the single largest employer in the world, especially in developing countries. Addressing these challenges is necessary for the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 8, on decent work and economic growth, for young people.[16]

40. As the world shifts into the fourth industrial revolution, technological changes and advances are reshaping the future of work for young people, affecting both the quantity and quality of jobs.[17] Young people, who are often more knowledgeable about technology than older workers, have been increasingly utilizing skills in these areas to make a living, including through Internet-related employment, such as crowdwork, although such work often entails low wages and a lack of employment security. The skills needed to succeed in the workforce have also changed, with the demand for high-skilled workers, in particular in high-income countries, and low-skilled workers, especially in developing and emerging countries, increasing, while the need for middle-level skills has declined. New technology could contribute further to job polarization and increase inequalities.[15] Young people entering the workforce have their own set of challenges, and these can be exacerbated by this rapidly changing context. In some instances, technology can also support better working conditions, for example, in the case of the agricultural sector, in which new technologies may attract more rural young people to such work.[18] In addition, in response to the rapidly changing landscape, Member States have created policies and implemented programmes, with the support of private sector and international partners (i.e., the World Bank), to bolster youth employment, among other things.[19]

41. Mass migration, especially of young people, to urban centres has created challenges in terms of employment creation and the expansion of job-related services for them. In some countries with particularly high youth unemployment rates (e.g., Armenia and Greece), retaining human capital is also challenging because large numbers of qualified or skilled young people seek opportunities to study or work abroad, with many not returning. Some Member States have created initiatives to tackle this brain drain, which contributes to a shortage of experts in their countries (e.g., Slovakia).

42. Member States continue to emphasize youth employment in their national youth policies, action plans and strategies (e.g., India, Indonesia, Mauritania, the Philippines and South Africa) or have addressed young people in their national employment policies, strategies, legislation and plans (Iraq, Mozambique, Romania

[16] Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, "Promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all".

[17] International Labour Organization, *Global Employment Trends for Youth 2017: Paths to a Better Working Future* (Geneva, 2017); World Bank, "The fourth industrial revolution", available at https://blogs.worldbank.org/taxonomy/term/15008 (accessed on 28 November 2018); Moninder Singh, Serge Kapoto and Devika Iyer, "Artificial intelligence and the future of our work", United Nations Development Programme, 11 January 2018, available at www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/blog/2018/ai-and-the-future-of-our-work.html (accessed on 28 November 2018); United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *World Youth Report: Youth and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*.

[18] Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, *Ending Extreme Poverty in Rural Areas: Sustaining Livelihoods to Leave No One Behind* (Rome, 2018), p. 33.

[19] See, for example, Mastercard Foundation, https://mastercardfdn.org/.

and Timor-Leste). Targeted policies, legislation, strategies or initiatives to address youth employment, including to support vocational and technical skills learning, were also newly developed, including with United Nations partners such as ILO (e.g., Brazil, Côte d'Ivoire, Mozambique, the Niger, Uganda and Uruguay), while others are in the process of being developed (Kazakhstan and Montenegro). In their effort to implement the 2030 Agenda, Member States have also established employment policies and programmes to support groups of young people who may be vulnerable to social exclusion, including by removing barriers and creating special targeted measures for inclusion (Rwanda and Uruguay).

43. Member States continue to promote youth entrepreneurship as an approach to generating employment opportunities and innovation (Cabo Verde, El Salvador, Jamaica and the Niger), including efforts at increasing social entrepreneurship, supported by legislation and policy. For example, Colombia passed youth employment and entrepreneurship legislation. Some young people, however, continue to be "necessity" or "subsistence" entrepreneurs, that is, those who are self-employed out of economic necessity because they have been unable to secure other employment and who are frequently part of the informal economy.

44. United Nations entities supported efforts to increase and improve youth employment, with emphases on decent jobs and the acquisition of skills for employment, either as key commitments of their entity's work or as part of specific policy or programme initiatives in response to related issues. Support was also provided for the development of stand-alone policies on young people and for the inclusion of an emphasis on young people in national employment legislation. Further information is available in section IV.

C. Gender equality and the empowerment of young women and girls

45. During the reporting period, gender equality and the empowerment of women garnered worldwide attention, with an emphasis on the discrimination or harassment faced by women and young women alike, including harassment in the workplace and sexual harassment.

46. Globally, young women continued to encounter and be disproportionally affected by challenges to their inclusion in all aspects of society. Significant barriers affecting their integration remain because of discriminatory laws, institutions and attitudes. Obstacles faced include early marriage and adolescent pregnancy, unequal pay for work of equal value, gender-based violence, political inclusion, unpaid care work, legal impediments and restrictions and securing employment and lower wages. With respect to health concerns, of the estimated 290,000 new HIV infections among young people in East and Southern Africa, two thirds occurred among young women.[20]

47. Gender equality is a stand-alone goal in the 2030 Agenda (Sustainable Development Goal 5), with key indicators regarding disaggregated data on the situation of young women (A/72/190, p. 19), and is crucial to the acceleration of sustainable development more broadly. There is growing recognition that the ability of young women to achieve their potential contributes to poverty reduction and the creation of more inclusive and peaceful societies. For example, while the needs of young women in conflict settings remain a global concern, there was an increased

[20] Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, *The Youth Bulge and HIV* (Geneva, 2018).

acknowledgement of the important role of young women as powerful agents of peace in conflict prevention and peacebuilding.[21]

48. Because of specific obstacles to their political participation, young women are often underrepresented as voters and in elected office and leadership roles. Member States have taken specific measures to address this, including implementing quotas for the participation of women in national youth councils and instituting programmes aimed at providing leadership, mentoring, scholarship and support to young women (Switzerland).

49. Globally, young women are more likely to be unemployed and undertake more unpaid work than young men.[15] While global averages indicate that gender parity in participation exists at all education levels (except tertiary), they disguise the fact that only 45 per cent of countries have achieved gender parity in lower secondary education and 25 per cent in upper secondary.[22] Girls and young women also face impediments to their education, with their access to schooling heavily restricted in many parts of the world because of poverty, cultural norms, conflict and unsuitable infrastructure. When in education, school-related gender-based violence can be underreported because it involves taboos. Women with disabilities face exclusions often associated with both gender and disability, thus compounding their challenges. Age, race and other aspects of identity can put some subgroups of women with disabilities at further risk of marginalization. Women not in education or employment, in particular, illustrate this compounded disadvantage, given that young women with disabilities tend to have the highest rates of exclusion.

50. Member States remain concerned about reducing discrimination against young women and ending harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage, and challenging stereotypes that help to perpetuate inequalities. To redress specific gender stereotypes, training for young men and boys on gender and new masculinities have been implemented. Several countries took steps to end child marriage, including by amending legislation (El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, India, Malawi and Trinidad and Tobago).

51. Addressing violence against young women remains a priority for Member States, and some have introduced national plans to guide their efforts, such as Australia's National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children for the period 2010–2022. Several countries eliminated laws that allow those who commit rape to escape punishment if they marry their victims (Jordan, Lebanon and Tunisia). In 2016, Australia also instituted the national "Stop it at the Start" primary prevention campaign, which encourages influencers of young people to confront attitudes that support violence and, in turn, to generate long-term cultural change.

52. Young women in rural communities face greater challenges, including poorer health outcomes, difficulties in gaining access to affordable and quality care and detrimental effects of climate change and environmental degradation. Member States have sought to utilize ICT and connectivity in the empowerment of rural young people, for example, by using technology such as satellite television to teach children in the Amazon in Brazil and using an SMS-based literacy programme in Afghanistan

[21] United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), *Young Women in Peace and Security: At the Intersection of the YPS and WPS Agendas* (New York, 2018).

[22] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, *Global Education Monitoring Report 2017/8. Accountability in Education: Meeting our Commitments* (Paris, 2017), p. xvi.

to target girls and young women who cannot travel easily beyond their home owing to social restrictions.[23]

53. Member States continue to support improved health outcomes for young women, including in relation to sexual and reproductive health and rights. Relevant approaches have included the provision of comprehensive sexuality education (e.g., in school curriculums), family planning services and facilities and services to prevent and treat sexually transmitted infections (Azerbaijan, Ghana, Indonesia, Kenya and Uruguay). In 2016, Uruguay adopted the intersectoral Strategy for the Prevention of Unintentional Pregnancy in Adolescents.

54. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex children and young people and others seen as gender non-conforming, too often experience bullying and violence and thus are at a higher risk of dropping out of school and of suffering low self-esteem, anxiety and depression. To achieve greater inclusivity of these young people, Canada and Germany allow persons to register as a third gender in official documents. Argentina developed a legislative framework to address sexual orientation and gender identity issues in education, while Ireland launched its LGBT National Youth Strategy for the period 2018–2020, which is the first of its kind in the world, to ensure a cross-governmental approach to address the key challenges faced by lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender young people in order for them to achieve positive outcomes consistent with those of their peers.

55. At the global level, in 2017, the United Nations and the European Union initiated the multi-year Spotlight Initiative to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls through a United Nations multi-stakeholder trust fund. EQUALS, a multi-stakeholder global partnership for gender equality in the digital age founded by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), United Nations University and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), serves to build knowledge, efforts and resources so that women and girls can be equal participants in the technology revolution.

56. Many United Nations entities take a twin-track approach to advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, addressing these as cross-cutting issues in their areas of work and undertaking targeted efforts. For example, the World Bank designs projects that focus on the promotion of gender equality. These have included situation analyses on keeping girls in school in Malawi and Zambia and the distribution of school tuition vouchers for vulnerable young woman in Pakistan. In 2017, UN-Women launched "Youth LEAP into gender equality" to empower young people to become partners in achieving gender equality. The sixty-second Commission on the Status of Women featured a youth dialogue, and discussions centred on challenges and opportunities to empower women and achieve gender equality for girls and young women, including those living in rural communities.

IV. Efforts by the United Nations to develop additional measures to support local, national, regional and international efforts on behalf of young people

57. United Nations entities continue to promote coherent and coordinated efforts towards the achievement of youth development objectives, including those set out in the World Programme of Action for Youth and the 2030 Agenda, and to encourage the inclusion of young people in global processes and sustainable development. To support these efforts, in 2017, Jayathma Wickramanayake was appointed the

[23] United Nations Children's Fund, *State of the World's Children 2017: Children in a Digital World* (New York, 2017).

Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth to strengthen advocacy and to help to realize the Secretary-General's vision for young people, which views them as a cross-cutting United Nations' priority. In September 2018, Ravi Venkatesan was appointed the UNICEF Special Representative of young people and innovation.

A. Renewed United Nations commitment to young people: United Nations Youth Strategy

58. The United Nations Youth Strategy envisions a world in which the human rights of every young person are realized, every young person is empowered to achieve his or her full potential and the agency, resilience and positive contributions of young people are recognized. The Strategy's objective is to increase impact and global, regional and country-level action to tackle the needs of young people and ensure their involvement in the 2030 Agenda and beyond. To strengthen the ability of the United Nations to deliver for young people, the Strategy is geared towards having the Organization become a "leadership example", "knowledge and innovation pioneer", an "investment and solution catalyst" and an "accountability leader". It also contains calls for the United Nations to strengthen its efforts in five priority areas: engagement, participation and advocacy; solid and healthy foundations; economic empowerment through decent jobs; young people and human rights; and peacebuilding and resilience-building.

59. The United Nations Youth Strategy provides an umbrella for inter-agency initiatives, such as the Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth and Generation Unlimited, a global partnership launched by UNICEF, which is aimed at ensuring that every young person is in education, learning, training or employment by 2030. Launched in September 2018, the Secretary-General has designated his Envoy on Youth to lead the implementation of the Strategy, with the support of a steering committee.

B. Developments in young people and peace and security

60. In September 2018, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the Peacebuilding Support Office launched the first study mandated by the Security Council in its resolution 2250 (2015). The study, entitled "The missing peace: independent progress study on youth and peace and security", was the culmination of intensive participatory research that engaged 4,200 young people through consultations and focus group discussions. A version of the study was presented to the Council in April 2018, and an open debate, which marked the first time that a debate was focused entirely on the positive contribution to the peace and security of young people, was held in the same month.

61. In the report, a number of stereotypes associating young people with violence are debunked, and it highlights how young people mobilize themselves to address violence. It is further noted in the report that, for societies to capture and support the contributions of young people and address the seismic challenges identified, it is critical to invest in the capacities, agency and leadership of young people, transform systems that reinforce exclusion in order to tackle structural barriers limiting youth participation in peace and security and prioritize partnerships and collaborative action, in which young people are seen as equal.

62. Recognizing the role of young people in building resilient and peaceful societies, Member States continue to collaborate with United Nations entities to implement Security Council resolutions 2250 (2015) and 2419 (2018) at the regional and country levels. For example, UNFPA implemented projects in Albania, Chile,

Indonesia, Sri Lanka and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. The United Nations Alliance of Civilizations is implementing the Young Peacebuilders Programme and summer schools in various regions of the world to strengthen the global movement of young peacebuilders, especially in countries in the Middle East and North Africa and the West Africa regions.

63. In line with Security Council resolutions 2250 (2015) and 2419 (2018), as well as Sustainable Development Goal 16, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs is implementing a project in Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire and Togo and another one in , Kenya, Lebanon and Liberia, both aimed at strengthening the capacities of governments and youth organizations to engage, build trust and develop coalitions for the design and implementation of policies that contribute to conflict prevention and sustaining peace. Through a series of workshops and policy dialogues, the projects offer a holistic perspective that connects peace and security to sustainable development.

C. Youth Forum of the Economic and Social Council

64. The Economic and Social Council Youth Forum, organized by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and other United Nations and youth civil society partners, continued to serve as a platform for young people to engage in dialogue with Member States and to share their ideas on innovation, collective action and solutions to global problems. In 2017, it focused on the role of young people in poverty eradication and promoting prosperity in a changing world and, in 2018, on the role of young people in building sustainable and resilient urban and rural communities. On each occasion, the Youth Forum mirrored the Sustainable Development Goals covered at the high-level political forum on sustainable development that year. The Youth Forum is expected to be even more closely linked to the high-level political forum in the future.

D. Additional efforts for youth development undertaken by United Nations entities

65. The United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development continues to promote greater collaboration on youth development in the United Nations system, including by undertaking research and consultative efforts towards the development of the United Nations Youth Strategy in 2017 and early 2018. Forthcoming efforts include mainstreaming a youth development lens into specific goals to be reviewed at the high-level political forum on sustainable development by leveraging the Network's knowledge base to collaborate on research and analysis, with a view to developing evidence-based policy recommendations.

66. In 2017, International Youth Day focused on the theme of "Youth building peace" and was celebrated with an event led by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs at Headquarters in New York, in collaboration with the United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development working group on young people and peacebuilding. In 2018, the International Youth Day theme was "Safe spaces for youth", centring on the need for available and accessible civic, public, digital and physical spaces for young people. The event, led by the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), was held at the United Nations Office at Nairobi.

67. United Nations entities continue to enhance their technical and capacity-building efforts, providing support to Member States in their efforts towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. In 2017, the Commonwealth

secretariat, along with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and eight other United Nations entities, organized a workshop on evidence-based policies on youth development in Asia to encourage dialogue on the sharing of good practices for evidence-based policies on young people in the region. A Development Account project by the Economic Commission for Africa, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific resulted in the launch of a youth policy toolbox in November 2017.

68. With the aim of developing evidence-based crime prevention policies targeting distinct groups of young people at risk, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and UN-Habitat jointly implemented a project on safety audit processes in Colombia, Mexico and South Africa. In addition, UNODC focused on strengthening the capacity of law enforcement officials in investigating, apprehending and adjudicating travelling child sex offenders and perpetrators of online child sexual exploitation in Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Viet Nam.

69. Through research and the promotion of disaggregated data collection and analysis, United Nations entities continue to develop guidelines, training manuals, toolkits and comprehensive programmes closely aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals and indicators (ILO, the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, UNFPA, UNICEF and the World Health Organization (WHO)). To inspire a new wave of activism on the HIV response, UNAIDS and ACT!2030, a youth-led social initiative, used research and data collection led by young people to establish accountability mechanisms for sexual and reproductive rights. Similarly, WHO supported the Global Accelerated Action for the Health of Adolescents (AA-HA!) approach to develop evidence-based, data-driven comprehensive plans for adolescent health and development in 61 country teams covering the period 2017–2018.

70. To facilitate the school-to-work transition, ILO carried out surveys in Brazil, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Jamaica and Peru with the aim of strengthening national education and training systems, while providing advisory services on youth employability, targeting the Middle East and North Africa and Latin America and Caribbean regions.

71. The most recent *World Youth Report*, focusing on young people and the 2030 Agenda, highlights the role of young people in the realization of the 2030 Agenda, including them as critical partners and participants in the design and implementation of the policies created to realize its implementation. The report includes a detailed statistical annex. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights published a report on young people and human rights (A/HRC/39/33), which sets out the human rights framework applicable to young people and outlines the challenges and discrimination that they face in having their rights recognized.

72. With the overall objective of building consensus among governments and furthering youth development, including access to education, health, employment and gender equality, many United Nations entities continue to promote a coordinated response to advance the inclusion of young people from vulnerable and marginalized backgrounds, especially those with disabilities, refugees and migrants and young women and girls (United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, UNFPA, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)).

73. United Nations entities (ILO, ITU, UNICEF, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and UNIDO) also provide support to Member States [illegible] skills to help them to adopt

entrepreneurship, skills building, training and enhancing a smooth school-to-work transition. In Africa, the Southern African Development Community (SADC), with support provided by ILO, adopted a youth employment promotion policy framework in 2016 to assist countries in realizing decent, secure and sustainable employment and entrepreneurship.

74. The Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth continued its efforts to mobilize global resources and knowledge to maximize the effectiveness of youth employment investment. As part of the Initiative, ILO and ITU led the Digital Skills for Decent Jobs Campaign in 2017 to encourage decent and inclusive employment opportunities under the 2030 Agenda, for which ITU developed a digital skills toolkit.

75. To enable better employment prospects at the national level, including for young people, ILO helped to establish employment service centres, provided certification for semi-skilled and skilled level construction workers in Jordan and introduced a model to upgrade informal apprenticeships in Yemen. To strengthen the collection of data, including for employment forecasts and analysis and for better designed youth-related programmes, ILO supported national statistics offices in Lebanon and the Occupied Palestinian Territory. UNIDO launched Start & Grow, an online toolkit developed in collaboration with AIESEC International, with a view to helping young people to gain the skills needed to create and develop sustainable enterprises. UNIDO also partnered with UNCTAD to support the Government of Ethiopia in its efforts to build a nurturing and inclusive environment for self-employment that will benefit young people.

76. UNESCO continued its work towards adequate skills development, including by adopting a technical and vocational education and training strategy for the period 2016–2021 aimed at supporting Member States in enhancing their technical and vocational education and training systems in order to foster the skills required for employment, decent work, entrepreneurship and lifelong learning. In this context, UNESCO is implementing the Youth Employment in the Mediterranean project, funded by the European Union, to help to address youth unemployment in the region by improving skills anticipation and assessment systems and the quality and relevance of technical and vocational education and training and fostering regional cooperation. SADC is finalizing its second Strategic Framework for the period 2018–2027 on the development of technical and vocational education and training in the region.

77. UNFPA has worked jointly with partner agencies to support countries in the collection and analysis of disaggregated data on young people to develop national policies to address issues such as youth employment and helped to develop a National Youth Service Scheme in Sierra Leone, to be implemented in 2018, in order to engage young people in national service.

78. In addition to mobilizing 544 United Nations Youth Volunteers throughout the United Nations system in 2017, United Nations Volunteers has continued to support Member States in drafting youth-specific legislation and the establishment of national youth volunteer schemes, in addition to regional-level assistance to African Union Youth Volunteer Corps and the Economic Community of West African States Volunteer Programme in West Africa.

79. To ensure the health and well-being of children, adolescents and young people, United Nations entities (the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, UNFPA, UNICEF, the World Food Programme and WHO) have assisted countries in mainstreaming youth priorities into policy planning to effectively respond to the needs of their young populations. In 2017, WHO appointed an Adviser on Gender and Youth in the office of the Director General to signal a high-level commitment to youth needs. UNICEF, UNFPA and WHO partnered to advocate increased government

budget allocations towards reducing adolescent pregnancy. More than 100 countries have complied with this recommendation.

80. Several United Nations entities, including UNICEF, UNFPA, UNHCR and the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, work closely with youth-led organizations to ensure their inclusion in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of projects and policies that benefit them. The Office also works closely with the children and youth major group to involve young people in local platforms for disaster risk reduction.

V. Conclusion and recommendations

81. This report has highlighted progress made and ongoing challenges faced in realizing the Sustainable Development Goals for young people, as well as the World Programme of Action for Youth, with an emphasis on education, employment and gender equality. On the basis of the information and analysis provided above, the following recommendations are put forward for consideration by Member States.

(a) **Strengthen evidence-based national policies and programmes for young people, including by generating and using more robust disaggregated data on young people; support efforts to mainstream youth priorities across sectoral policies and ensure commitments with adequate resources for their implementation**;

(b) **Promote the full participation of young people and their organizations in political, social and development spheres and in decision-making at local, regional and global levels, including in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda**;

(c) **Redouble efforts towards the provision of quality education, especially to marginalized groups of young people, and ensure that learning helps to develop skills for the future of work and adequately comprises sustainable development education, conflict prevention and civic engagement**;

(d) **Develop and support initiatives, programmes and policies for the creation of decent jobs for young people, including targeting disadvantaged young people, and fostering partnerships for job creation and scaling up investment for youth employment, including green jobs**;

(e) **Systematically apply a gender-sensitive, age-sensitive and disability-sensitive lens to policies, programmes and legislative reform affecting young people to empower young women, respond to their needs and address discriminatory attitudes and practices that have an impact on their rights and agency**.